CHAPEL TALKS

CHARLES CARROLL ALBERTSON

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CHAPEL TALKS

A COLLECTION OF SERMONS TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By
CHARLES CARROLL ALBERTSON, D.D.
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Preface

TWICE or thrice a year, by the generous kindness of the Session of the Lafayette Avenue Church, the author is permitted to absent himself from his Brooklyn pulpit to fulfill the duties of a college ministry. No more eager and responsive congregations confront any preacher than those composed of young men and young women in our college chapels. If, at times, they do not conceal their dislike for "mere formalities and roundabout modes of speech," the knowledge of their liberal appreciation of direct and helpful words is both tonic and inspiring.

The sermons in this collection have been preached during the last four or five years in various colleges and universities in the East, including Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Princeton, the University of Virginia and Yale. Some of the briefer sermons have been delivered at vesper services in which, as at Cornell and Dartmouth, the preacher is limited to twelve or fifteen minutes. But one may say a good deal in a short time, by the

omission of conventional "introductions," "perorations" and the like. The necessity to eliminate all unnecessary elaboration must exercise a considerable corrective influence on one's sermon-making. There is not a great deal of difference between the constituency of the college congregation and that of the city pastor's Sunday evening congregation. There are the same prompt responsiveness, the same heart-hunger for practical help in making the spiritual life real, the same evident hospitality to new truth or to new statements of old truth, and the same liking for certain types of hymns—buoyant, joyful, positive, even militant.

It is a source of genuine satisfaction to the author that a former volume of his college sermons has been useful to leaders of informal religious services at certain secondary schools and private schools in which, on Sunday evenings, sermons or portions of sermons have been read to the students gathered about the piano for "family worship." This fact alone explains, if it does not justify, the printing of another book.

C. C. A.

Brooklyn, New York City.

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I

The Revelation in Us

"It pleased God to reveal His Son in me."
—Galatians i. 15, 16.

THERE may be some question as to what is the strongest word in the English language. It is either "supreme" or "absolute." Both express power raised to the highest degree. There may be some question as to what is the sweetest word in our tongue. Is it "love" or "home" or "friendship" or "comfort"? There is not so much room to question what is the greatest word in our speech. Ask the jurist, the naturalist, the historian, the philosopher or the theologian, his great word, his incomparable word, and he will tell you it is TRUTH.

Jesus never said a nobler thing than when He declared, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free;" nor prayed a more exalted prayer than that John records: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy

word is truth." When He uttered that petition, He stood in full sight of two nations, one seeking the perfection of life through wisdom and beauty, the other bent upon the realization of power through conquest and through law. And, in view of these ideals, Jesus said, without apology to Athens or to Rome, "This is life eternal, to know God," said, in substance, "Life at its best, life on the highest plane and in the largest circle; life abundant, life deep and broad and high, belongs neither to the sage nor the artist; neither to the conqueror nor the king, but to the soul possessing, and possessed by truth."

Truth is of various kinds as to its nature and as to the mode of its acquisition. There are truths that are self-evident. They need no proof, and, generally, proof is not called for. And, if it were, in many instances proof is most difficult. It is an abnormal, not to say subnormal, mind that requires demonstration of the self-evident. Two men were in argument. One said, "We seem not to agree on anything; let us see if we have any common standing-ground. You will admit, I suppose, that two and two are four?" The other replied, "I admit nothing. Two books and

two pictures are neither four books nor four pictures. Your numeral adjectives must modify the same nouns!" Then said the first, "Will you admit that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points?" "No," said the skeptic, "I will not; it is so in theory, but not invariably so in practice." The argument ended. It was collision with such a mind, perhaps, which led a French philosopher of the eighteenth century to remark that conversation with some people would be easier if it were not for the necessity of using words!

With the self-evident truths of mathematics and physics most of us are fairly familiar. But with the axioms of ethics and of religion we are not so well acquainted. Consider one of the simplest axioms of ethics as regards property. It may be thus stated: No man ever enriched himself by defrauding another. The law says theft is wrong. This axiom declares it is futile. Some people do not believe it. They insist upon experiment, but in the end, the axiom is self-evidencing. There is one illuminating moment, soon or late, in the life of every unjust man when he sees things as they are, when it dawns—or

flashes—upon him that possession and ownership are not synonymous terms, that he has been juggling with two and two, confusing straight lines and crooked, and when he pronounces upon himself the sentence he has yet to hear from the Throne of all Equities, "Thou fool!"

What are some of the axiomatic truths of religion? God, the soul, sin, salvation, prayer. These exist in some form in all religions. If religion be thought of as a picture, these are the primary colours; if as a building, these are the foundation. Our Scriptures never argue that there is a God, or that man is immortal, or that we need to be saved from sin, or that we ought to pray. This Book simply and grandly affirms these truths; but demonstration is not needed. All men believe in God—all men always have believed in God—at times. All men pray—all men always have prayed—at times. Which is to say, however mad we are, we do have our lucid intervals; however "blinded by the near," we have our moments of farsight; in the great crises of our lives we fall back upon the axioms of religion.

But, however great may be the number of

self-evident truths of every kind, and however they may unconsciously underlie all our ordinary thinking, they are few, compared with that vast body of truths which are not self-evident, but are discoverable. They are benevolently few. It is good for us that most truths are concealed from view; that we must search for them, dig for them, climb for them; for the reward of the truth-seeker is not altogether in the truth he seeks, but as well in the process of discovery. He was wise who said, "If the great God were to offer me the choice of two gifts, in one hand truth, and in the other the quest of truth, I should take this, not that."

It is one of the glories of our age that there are increasing numbers of men who reckon not any sacrifice too costly, who count not their own lives dear to them, if by any means they may add to the world's storehouse of truth. There are men in this, and every university, who would much rather discover a new truth in their branch of science than to uncover a pot of gold. "Buy the truth and sell it not" is their motto,—obtain it at any price, part with it at no price. The particular truth discovered may not be applicable to

life; it may not even be interesting to the world; but if it be truth, they have their reward.

As a matter of fact, however, many of these discoveries are practicable. The scalpel, the crucible, the retort, the test tube, the microscope,—these are the weapons with which, in laboratory and machine-shop, humanity's adventurous soldiers have pushed back the horizon of darkness and enlarged the sphere of light and learning and labour.

Nor are investigation and research alien to the spirit of religion. Nature's laws are but the habits of God. Not alone the devout astronomer, but the devout chemist and the devout biologist and the devout machinist, may say, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" Christianity with its dominant social doctrine of the largest possible development of the individual, its doctrine of the development of the individual through vital relationship to all other individuals, its doctrine that no one of us can be at his best until all others are at their best,—such a Christianity is hospitable to every truth, friendly to every truth-seeker. Not alone the things that are, but the things that

ought to be, are for us to meditate,—ideal conditions of industry, of economics, of commerce, of society. Not alone "whatsoever things are true," but "whatsoever things are equitable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are beautiful, whatsoever things are well-spoken of,"—on them we are to think.

But there are other truths which are neither axiomatic nor discoverable. They do not evidence themselves, nor do they lie at the end of any process of logic or research. They become known to us, if at all, only by revelation. They are of such a character as to defy analysis and exclude demonstration. But let us not think less of them on this account. There are intimate and far-reaching realms of life where there is no room for the analyst. Such are the realms of friendship and love and conscience and honour. The scientific investigator has no standing there. The pure materialist is helpless there. Falstaff is there with his yardstick measuring honour. See how he does it: "Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No.

What is honor? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air. . . . Who hath it? He that died o'Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible, then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honour is a mere scutcheon: and so ends my catechism."

Here also is another realm, as near to us as friendship and love, as dear to us as conscience and honour, yet equally far from ocular demonstration. It is the realm of faith. Of a truth in this realm Jesus spoke after Peter had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God": "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Of such a truth Paul spoke when he said, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Let pure reason deal with the fact of Jesus' advent, and it will say, "Jesus came to proclaim the love of God and to exemplify the ideal life." But let revelation speak, and lo!

it says: "Not alone to show how human is the heart of God and how divine may be the life of man, but to lift man up to God, came Jesus Christ from God."

This is the truth worthy of all acceptation: Underneath are everlasting arms. Underneath what? Underneath our failures and our follies; underneath our weakness and weariness; underneath the problem of the purification, enlightenment and elevation of our lives. He lifts us. He lifts us out of ourselves, above ourselves, our selfish selves, our narrow selves, our little selves, our too-easily-satisfied selves, out of moral impotence, to freedom and power.

An Oriental Christian pictured his deliverance thus: "I had fallen into a deep ditch from which I could not, unaided, escape. Confucius came, looked down on me, and said, "If you had obeyed my laws you would never have been in such a plight." Buddha came, looked down on me, and said, "Cease your struggling. Repress your desire to escape. Be calm and passionless; presently you will be indifferent to your fate." Another came, looked down on me, and said, "You are not in distress,—you merely think

you are. You thought yourself into error; you must think yourself out." Then Jesus Christ came, and saw me, and pitied me, and stooped down and with His strong but tender Hand lifted me out of the pit. Do you wonder I follow Him?"

This is the great truth of revelation. But it is not all of the truth. The further truth relates to the method of the revelation of God. Paul affirms, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." If there is any esoteric truth in Christianity—any truth designed for the initiate only—this is it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Self-evident truths are perceived. Discovered truths are apprehended. Revealed truths are experienced. So this truth is not for the acute intellect, nor for the industrious mind, but for the open heart. This explains the saying, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes."

He who wrote this text to the Galatians wrote to the Colossians, "Christ in you (is) the hope of glory." And the Master Himself said something very like it to the Samaritan woman: "Whoso drinketh of the water that

I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Power within, uprising and upbearing. Is there anything like it? Look at the mechanism of a canal-lock. From underneath floods of water pour into the basin, lifting its surface, and, incidentally, lifting all burdens that rest upon its surface to higher levels.

There is a stanza in a recent poem, with which you are familiar, which derives its force from such a symbol:

> "Like tides on a crescent sea-beach
> When the moon is new and thin,
> Into our hearts high yearnings
> Come sweeping and surging in,—
> Come from the Infinite Ocean
> Whose rim no feet have trod:
> Some of us call it longing,
> And others call it God."

It is God, and the fact is He comes in with the longing. So said Jesus, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

This is the blessed truth of the evangel. The Infinite seeks alliance with us. Jesus

Christ, by His Spirit, seeks entrance not alone into our lives, but into our consciousness. He seeks it for our sakes. We shall never be all we may be until we are in union with Him. He seeks it for His own sake, for Jesus Christ can never be the Universal Saviour He desires to be until all men everywhere are in union with Him.

It is wonderful how a life may be filled and rounded by fellowship with one true friend, one great and loyal soul. Our personalities come to their best development through our friends, and their personalities reach their highest power through us.

This is the secret of the Christian life, of the strongest and most radiant souls—they heard the voice of a Divine Friend saying, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear My voice and open unto Me, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me." And they were not deaf to the Voice.

A child once saw Holman Hunt's picture illustrating these words,—a Kingly figure at the door, a lantern in His hand, the door vine-embowered, and after studying it, said, "I wonder if the door has been shut so long they can't open it?" Presently another solution,

perhaps the true solution, occurred to him, and he said, "I know why He is standing there! They don't hear Him,—they are living in the back of the house!"

Whatever reason, or whatever notion serving as a reason, whatever pride, or prejudice, or preoccupation, or passion has closed our hearts to Him whose entrance into our affections waits upon our will, let us this day rise up and let Him in!

II

My Father's God

"He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him."
—Exodus xv. 2.

THE text is a part of one of the earliest songs we know. And it is a great song, great in its epic majesty and great in its emotional appeal. It was composed and sung on a memorable occasion,—the deliverance of Israel's hosts from the pursuing army of Egypt. Marvellous were its accompaniments. The sea was casting up its dead at their feet. Behind them were two centuries of slavery, before them the prospect of a new life in a free land.

They had witnessed signs and wonders. They had experienced the travail pains of a nation. No wonder they sang. A nation born in a day! Not thus did our nation—not thus, perhaps, has any other nation—come into being. Most nations grow as the River Rhine grows, from innumerable sources in springs and tributary streams. The Jewish

nation began as the Rhone begins,—where it leaps into power from the melting heart of a glacier. Egypt's cold hard heart has melted, and lo! a nation flows out, a great nation, to mingle its history with that of earth's mightiest peoples; destined never to be vast in area, never to be capable of conquests such as those of Persia or Rome, but truly great in the extent of its historic influence, and in the expansive power of its ideas.

He who composed this song was a gifted poet,—the same who wrote, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations," words which have been spoken beside more open graves than any other. Thus the great song begins:

"I will sing unto the Lord,
For He hath triumphed gloriously!
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea!
The Lord is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation:
He is my God,
And I will prepare Him an habitation;
(He is) my father's God, and I will exalt Him."

It may not be possible to recall all that was in Moses' mind when he sang of his father's

God, but more or less clearly he must have perceived the indebtedness of the Present to the Past. He knew he was what he was largely because his fathers were what they were. The blood of Joseph was in his veins, and back of Joseph were Jacob and Isaac and Abraham, the pioneers of the Covenant with God. He was not only their descendant but their heir. If he had a knowledge of the true God, they had transmitted it to him.

And we are in like relation to the past. "Others have laboured and we have entered into their labours." There is not a truth we hold dear, or an institution we cherish, which is not the fruit of the labour and struggle, the tears and the blood of others, who preceded us here. This liberty of worship we prize so highly—at least in theory; this liberty we hold dear—and interpret as an equal liberty not to worship; this liberty we love—and neglect to exercise on inclement Sundays,—how did it come to us? As come the air, the winds, the night and day? Far from it! Men and women have been herded in foul prisons, or tortured and starved, or thrown to the beasts, or consumed by fagot-fires, or chained to stakes at low-tide until

the hungry sea has come up to strangle and swallow them,—all that we might have the right to meet for prayer and praise after our hearts' desire. Listen to John Bunyan, dreamer of dreams and seer of visions. From his narrow cell he hears the plash of the waters against Bedford Bridge; through its small window the air and sunshine of England's springtime beckon him. Freedom is dear to him as to us, and his blind daughter is at the door. Yet when they tell him he may go if he will but promise no more to hold "unlawful conventicles," he replies, "If you let me out to-day I will preach again to-morrow." Liberty of speech and of assembly were the issues there!

And this citizenship of ours, this right to shape the policies and determine the principles of civil government; this right to choose the men who shall rule over and serve under us; this kingly prerogative some men barter for a price; this royal authority some of us abdicate when going to primaries or polls interferes with a business trip or a picnic,—is it a small and negligible thing? Think not so. Armies have contended for it. Commons have gone to war with kings

for it. For it Milton wrote himself blind, Penn went to the tower, and many a noble head was severed from its brave body; all that government might be by the many, not the few.

This land, which we never really love until we have seen somewhat of other lands, is a part of our inheritance. Our flag,—other hands raised it, and made it the symbol of liberty and law.

There is hardly anything we have that is not inherited. Our fathers have given us our books, our pictures, our highways, the very means of our existence. Our fathers founded colleges, and endowed libraries for us; for us they bridged rivers and tunnelled mountains. The present prospers because firm-rooted in the past.

There is a spirit of Philistinism abroad which teaches contempt for the past. Democracy is vulgarly understood to imply indifference as to ancestry. False liberalism, pseudo-progressivism (using the term in its general sense) says, "Come now, let us liberate ourselves from the past!" This is the spirit that tramples on tradition, despises precedent, scorns authority, and writes upon

its banners, "Anywhere is our goal, just so we keep moving: anything is our aim, so it be something else!"

And, be it confessed, we must keep moving. When Alice in Wonderland complained to the Queen that with all their running they seemed to make no progress, the Queen explained, "We have to hurry up to stay where we are, here!" But we must not forget there is a spiral movement in history. We return where we were before, but slowly we ascend. The return to the past is a part of our upward progress. The process of evolution does not discard old forms; it incorporates them, and moves on!

It is not far from contempt for the past to indifference to the future. He who says, "The past imposes no obligation," has but a step to take to default in payment of all claims upon him by the future. Possibly the self-seeking politician who exclaimed, "Posterity? What has posterity ever done for us?" is not so much a caricature as a portrait —shall we say a composite portrait?

What is the Present? A bridge, a pontoon bridge, across the swiftly flowing years between the Past and the Future. It is for

us to carry over all that is worthy in what the Past has handed down to us,—to transmit it without the loss of a single treasure, and to transmit with it something we have added to that wealth by the works of our hands, the thoughts of our minds, the faith of our souls.

Our fathers' gift of freedom we are to preserve—and transmit; and if we can add to it; if we can make any man or class of men —or women—free whom they did not make free, we are to do that by way of interest on our original capital!

Our fathers' land we are to love, and improve, and bequeath unimpoverished and undiminished. If we are consuming the coal-supply, we must discover new sources of fuel. If we deforest the hills and mountains, we must reforest them. If we exhaust the soil, we must reënrich it. We must, because we ought, and ought means "owe it."

Our fathers' gift of popular government we are to defend against those, on one hand, who would limit it by delivering it, bound, to a corrupt ring, and on the other hand, against those who, because of evil conditions, would intrust it to a small commission. There may be emergencies which justify

such an experiment. We may need, here and there, object lessons in municipal efficiency and economy under expert management. Three or five or seven picked men may be able to give us a more nearly perfect city-government than we have given ourselves, but the virtue of democracy is in the paradox that it is generally better for a hundred thousand to govern themselves imperfectly, and so in time learn the art of self-government—than for one man—or ten men —to govern them perfectly.

What I have been trying to say is this: We are debtors to the Future for what we have received of the Past; for what we have received, and for as much more as we can add to it. And the best we have received and can give is GOD.

Our fathers' God. This thought inspired Kipling's "Recessional" and Dr. Smith's "America." Our fathers had a God. The great constructive work of Christendom has been wrought by men who had a God. Cathedrals, miracles in marble, were built by men who believed in Him. Immortal poems were written by men to whom He was a reality. Continents were discovered by men

who sought His glory. Constitutions were written by men who invoked His guidance. Painters painted as in His sight. Cities were founded in His name. Wherever we go among our modern nations we see that, whatever our faith or our lack of it, our fathers had a faith in God.

If their faith was sometimes accompanied by a fear that did God no honour, let us be careful in our effort to eliminate that fear, lest we also eliminate God.

There are nations which seem not to be able to get rid of an imposed religion without getting rid of the faith of which that religion was the faithless guardian. There are souls confronting that same problem. Oh, that we may learn how possible it is to cling to faith in God after all things else, that have attached themselves to faith like barnacles to a ship, have been stripped off; when all the parasites that have lived on faith, and well-nigh sucked the substance out of it, have been swept away!

In Jesus' day faith in God had been so long confused with faith in countless other things that men had lost their sense of God. He came to restore it. He did restore it.

Music and millinery, cadences and candlesticks, washings and fastings, speculations and discussions, had been piled up around religion like scaffolding around a temple, and at last men mistook the scaffolding for the temple. Jesus looked straight through all that, and showed us our fathers' God, very real and very near. That was His mission,—to confirm our spiritual intuitions, to reveal to us the Undiscoverable. How direct and transparent, how plain and appealing is His conception of God. This is a part of "the simplicity that is in Christ."

The singer's heart was glad and grateful as he thought of his fathers' God. Their faith was the best part of them. Our fathers' faith was their choicest possession, as it was the inspiration of their highest achievement. The fortunes they built up have been scattered. The houses they erected have fallen into decay, or have been replaced by larger. But their faith,—has anybody perfected an improvement on that? Has anybody discovered a wiser God? (There used to be a man who thought he might have been of some service to the Creator had he been present when things were planned! He said,

"Now I would have made health contagious instead of sickness if I had been God!" And in his innocence of logic he never saw what a blunder that would have been—that he would have made sickness our normal condition! Far wiser, though without a sense of humour, was the young woman who, some one told Thomas Carlyle, had said, "I accept the universe as it is," which made the old man smile grimly as he remarked, "What trouble she'd make for herself if she insisted upon some other kind of a universe.")

Has anybody discovered a saner Saviour than He who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"? Has anybody discovered a mightier Holy Spirit? Has anybody written a Book richer in sweetness and light than the Bible? Has any poet dreamed a fairer dream of the future than was theirs who pillowed their dying heads upon the promise, "In my Father's house are many mansions"? Has any reformer devised a better method of uplifting society than by uplifting the folks, one by one, of whom society is composed?

Is there any modern way of making people good by contract or by legislation? Is sin

diminished by denying its existence, or by applying to it a name less "short and ugly"? Can mere culture cure moral cancer? Is there any other way of getting into the kingdom of God than by being born into it, or, in fact, any other kingdom? (A plant is born into the vegetable kingdom—born from above; forces from above lift it.) The Christian is born into God's kingdom—lifted from a lower level by a "Power not himself."

We are sinners. Before the tribunal of moral judgment Universal Conscience pleads guilty. We need a Saviour. The purest are most conscious of their need. If the water supply in our houses were polluted, he would be a poor sanitary engineer who would be content to silver-plate the faucets! If we were dying of sleeping-sickness, he would be a foolish physician who would prescribe nothing better than alarm clocks!

Oh, these modern substitutes for religion! these methods of making us forget our fathers' God. They are not oases, but mirages; painted fires to sit at; painted oceans to bathe in! They are too obviously man-made!

Religion is no new thing among us. We

have all had religious training. Stealing out of the morning lands of memory come songs of faith, prayers of blessing, vows of service, dedications of children, promises to dear ones, all, all binding us to our fathers' God.

And stretching out their eager hands from the imagined lands of hope are generations yet to be to whom the promise is. Shall we hand on to them an abandoned faith, an enfeebled church, a contracted Kingdom of God? If so, ours is the loss, and theirs who shall follow us,—our fathers have escaped the moral bankruptcy which must ensue!

An old Jewish tailor, who worships God after the manner of his fathers, was saying the other day, "I am unhappy about the future of my family. I pray every day. My son prays once a week. My grandson prays once a year. When will his son pray?" "Once—when he is dying!" Where shall end a diminishing equation, ½ x ½ x ½ and so on? The phrase, "Our fathers' God," means something to us. What shall it mean to the men of to-morrow? We are writing their song now. Perhaps the phrase, "Our mothers' God," means more to some of us, for women are so much more faithful than

men, so much more reverent that they have been called "the conscience of the race." But it is all included in the text. Our fathers' God is the God of all worshipful souls:

> "Bards, prophets, heroes, sages,
> The noble of all ages
> Whose deeds crown history's pages
> And time's great volume fill."

The text is a call to exalt their God, a call to make Him our God. It is so, and only so, we begin to exalt Him,—by deliberately choosing Him to be our God. He it is who speaks to us this day in solemn entreaty, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, 'My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth,' and 'If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall surely find Me near!'"

I spoke of Kipling's "Recessional." There is a recent poem suggested by that eloquent first line, written by one who would call us back to our fathers' faith:

> "God of our fathers, known of old,
> Lord of all souls that love the light,
> Who taught the heroes to be bold
> And led the saints who walked in white,
> Gird Thou our loins and guide our feet
> That we for such an heritage be meet!

" God of all martyrs and all saints,
Touch us and teach us how to pray,
How to believe, and hush complaints,
And how to serve in this our day
As served apostles of the faith
Who bore the cross and smiled on death!

" Christ of the seeker after truth,
Christ of the doubter's honest quest,
Friend of the sorely tempted youth,
Friend of the weary needing rest,
The Father's glory in Thy face
Shines on us full of truth and grace."

III

Pure Religion

"Pure religion and undefiled before God our Father is this,—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep one's self unspotted from the world."—James i. 27.

THERE is much mystery *about* religion. There is not so much mystery *in* religion. It is easy to get lost in the fog of speculation concerning a thousand things that are related to religion. But religion itself, in its fundamental motives and manifestations, is a simple thing,—how simple, some of us have never even dreamed.

We do not have to solve the problem of transportation in order to buy a railroad ticket, and enter a train, and leave it at our destination. It is not absolutely necessary to understand the chemistry of cooking in order to enjoy a good dinner, or endure a poor one. It is quite possible for one to have an excellent friend,—a friend who is one's keenest and kindest critic, a friend who is a sort of

"beautiful enemy"—and remain in total ignorance of the psychology and philosophy of friendship.

There is a philosophy of religion, a metaphysics of religion, vast and voluminous,—more voluminous than luminous: but such knowledge is not indispensable to religious experience. It is valuable, let us not doubt that, but it is not indispensable to practical religion.

The text is a definition of pure religion. It is the studied opinion of a practical man, James, probably a brother of Jesus, a younger son in the household of Mary and Joseph. James is a typical younger brother. What younger brother ever accepted his elder brother's claims at their face value? The old adage may be paraphrased, "No young man is a hero to his younger brother." It is the tragedy of familiarity. This younger brother of Jesus is not among the apostles until after the resurrection. Not until then does James see in Jesus' face the glory of the eternal. Not until observation ceases does reflection well begin.

How many years James had lived under the same roof with Jesus, how many years he

had wrought at the same bench with Him, we do not know, perhaps a score. At any rate he must have known Jesus as none of the disciples did. And he must have brought into his apostleship at last a power to view things as Jesus viewed them. Unconsciously he would echo his immortal Brother's ideas and opinions.

Let us see what James says about religion. Let us see whether it agrees with what Jesus says about it. James says religion is benevolence and purity. That is the substance of the text. Jesus says religion is knowledge. That is the substance of His words, "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Is there not a disparity of view here between the brothers? Not at all. James is thinking of religion in its outward expression. Jesus is thinking of religion in its interior motive.

Acts must have motives. Results must have causes. We cannot produce a poem by the explosion of a type foundry! No "fortuitous combination of atoms" is sufficient to account for a statue or a picture, a watch or a flower, a crystal or a cell. Be-

nevolence and purity—James' religion—must have an adequate motive. Jesus furnishes it. So the two definitions are not contradictory, but complemental, one to the other.

With James' definition we are now dealing. "Pure" religion,—that is vital religion, as distinguished from formal religion; "undefiled" religion,—that is, true religion, unmodified by human interpretations; unspoiled by clumsy though honest efforts to explain it; unimposed religion, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. "Fatherless" and "widows" are representative terms: they were the neediest people James could think of, the ones most easily, and in his age most commonly, wronged. With us, the words stand for all the needy,—the deficient, the delinquent, the defective. "To visit" them means to minister to them, to protect them, to avenge their wrongs, to vindicate and safeguard their rights.

In simple forms of society, benevolence is, and must be, largely personal. In complex society it is, and must be, largely social, corporate, communal. He must be blind indeed who does not see how, in our day, the religious motive finds its expression in economic

and remedial legislation; how it works in channels of moral reform, through education, through sanitation, through the slow but sure uplift of the race, through improved industrial conditions, through multiplied agencies of mercy and help. Surely all who labour to secure pensions for indigent old age, and disability insurance for wage-earners; all who seek to stamp out preventable disease; all who are endeavouring to raise the age of consent in states where it is yet shamefully low; all who are fighting to set children free from labour in cotton-mills and coal-breakers; all who are bringing the paradise of shaded playgrounds into the inferno of city slums,—surely the strictest literalist will agree, all these are, in a very orthodox sense, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

I know how dry and juiceless are statistics. But here are some eloquent figures: results of a very recent study, involving 1,012 persons, indicate that seventy-one per cent. of general social workers, eighty-eight per cent. of social settlement workers, and ninety-two per cent. of Associated or United Charity workers, are church members. Think of it,

critics and "hecklers" of the church, only about thirty per cent. of the people are church members, yet this one-third of our population furnishes eighty-three per cent. of those whose vocation is to heal the open sores and ripen the rawness of society! What more convincing evidence of the relation between the religious motive and the philanthropic movements of our age?

But there is another part of this text, another phase of religion according to James, which interests us more particularly at this time,—"to keep one's self unspotted from the world." This reminds us of Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart." It takes us back to the Psalmist who sang, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart . . . shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord," and to Isaiah, who declared, "He that walketh uprightly and speaketh righteously, who despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; who shutteth his eyes from seeing evil and stoppeth his ears from hearing (of) blood,—he shall dwell on high." If any of us are ever tempted to think of Judaism as a mere provincial cult, let us read the thirty-third

chapter of Isaiah or the fifteenth or twenty-fourth Psalm.

James' word to denote purity is a very graphic one. It suggests the law of sacrifice which accepted only unblemished animals. It suggests Paul's picture of the perfect church, which is described as "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." It recalls the burning indignation of Jude—perhaps another brother of Jesus—who describes certain corrupt persons who had crept into the Church, even in that early age, as "spots in their feasts of charity." Spots, stains, blemishes,—what do these words describe? Souls which have suffered deterioration by contact with sin; lives that sin has scarred; hearts that have not learned to shed the evil influences which would drench us.

It is one of the saddest thoughts that can come to us, how soon an innocent child may learn the vocabulary of vice. It comforted James Russell Lowell, on the death of his first-born, that the boy "needed not to pause and cleanse his feet to stand before his God." He was a man of rich mental endowment (Hartley Coleridge) who wrote in his Bible:

"When I received this volume small,
My years were barely seventeen,
When it was hoped I should be all
Which once, alas! I might have been!
And now my years are thirty-five,
And every mother hopes her lamb—
And every happy child alive
May never be what now I am!"

Another man, more brilliant and more famous than Coleridge, was deeply conscious of defilement from the world when he wrote his soul's confession:

"Through life's paths so dim and dirty
I have come to three and thirty;
What have these years brought to me?
Nothing except thirty-three!"

On his thirty-sixth birthday the retrospect was still unrelieved by a single thought of goodness, the prospect still without a redeeming hope:

"My days are in the sere and yellow leaf;
The flower and fruit of life are gone:
The worm, the canker and the grief
Are mine alone."

Something indeed must be allowed for the poetic temperament, which in excess of self-abasement has been known to exaggerate its own guilt. (I know of a gentle child of

twelve, who once confessed she had broken all the commandments, committed all the crimes in the calendar, including the unpardonable sin. But it was merely an acute case of "ingrowing conscience.")

The cases cited, however, are not such. Neither are they instances of that conviction of sin, that sense of unworth which drives us to God. They are, rather, souls face to face with themselves in the dark; they illustrate the meaning of Thackeray's words, "the hell of the consciousness of moral incompleteness," or that equally striking phrase of Dickens, "the leprosy of unreality." It is the tragedy of tragedies,—grief that takes the joy out of the heart and the light out of the skies.

If Christianity did nothing more, its divine origin were well-authenticated by its demand upon us for purity of heart. It is about the only thing that does demand it. Society does not; fashion does not; learned societies do not,—the world "looketh on the outward appearance," but God sees beneath the surface, beneath that beauty which is only "seal-skin-deep," beneath the silken veil, the ermined robe, knocks at the door of every

chamber of reflection and desire and imagery, and inquires, "Is thy heart right?"

It was one who knew what depths of corruption may lie beneath fair exteriors who asked:

> "Ah, what avails to understand
> The merits of a spotless shirt,
> A dapper boot, a slender hand,
> If half the little soul be dirt?"

Soiled souls! Ah, if we were half as scrupulous about clean hearts as we are about clean linen! In some respects the world is very like a scullery. He must have thought so who wrote that strange verse in one of our psalms: "Though ye have dwelt among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with shining gold." There are ways of keeping one's self unspotted from the world.

Certain species of birds are provided with tiny oil glands in the skin, which keep their feathers covered with an invisible oil. Soot will not stick to them. They have an invisible armour. There are insects which dwell in the mud at the bottom of roadside pools, yet remain as bright as burnished brass. They are provided with suction glands which

interpose a stratum of dry air between them and the world about them. Air is their armour. Is it possible that creatures of this sort are protected against contamination and we left helpless against our enemies? Is the soul of man left unguarded against the forces that mar its beauty? Do not believe it! The God of nature is the God of grace. He demands holiness. Holiness is only another name for unspottedness. He does not require the impossible. Christianity offers us the means by which we may preserve our souls' integrity. We may keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

The world is a capacious term. It includes all that may deface and defile the soul; gross passions that beset youth's imperious years; appetites that clamour at the gates of manhood; tempers and habits that mar the soul's serenity; propensities which, if they were personified, might take the form of serpent or ape or peacock or swine or tiger.

Look with a philosopher's eyes upon a human crowd. Scan the faces. Greed and malice; petulance and insincerity; vanity and self-indulgence; sloth and selfishness; unjust severity and impatience of restraint,—

all are there! Hard faces, faces that have a terrible "northwest exposure," sad faces, hopeless faces, shallow faces, bad faces! Thank Heaven, not all, but so many! Because there are so many things that hurt the soul, and are reflected in the face and through the eyes, those windows of the soul! (The human countenance is not transparent, but it is translucent—like a vase of alabaster.)

What is the cure for soul-stains? What the defense? Wherein lies the secret of the radiant spirit, the "solar look" in the faces of those who wear the white badge of blameless living? It is fourfold:—an act, an attitude, an exercise, an atmosphere.

The act is that of self-surrender, by which we deliberately adopt God's plan for us. It is an act of the will.

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

It is in our wills there resides the treaty-making power of the soul. And the act by which we ally ourselves with God, call it consecration, call it self-surrender, call it "the great acceptance," call it "the soul's leap to God," is, in itself, a tie both strong and

tender, binding us to "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" which lead alone to purity and power.

The attitude which helps to keep us unspotted from the world is a logical and inevitable sequence of that act. When we accept God—our fathers' God—as our God and Guide, we take our places at the side of "that Man whom He hath ordained" to be our Saviour,—Jesus Christ. Standing at His side, we see things as He saw them, this world as God's world, and all world-processes as directed by Him, and ultimately to Him.

Such an attitude is the only permanent cure for pessimism. Only a hopeful spirit remains unspotted from the world. Only such a spirit can say, as says the Hoosier poet:

> "God's hand's on the helm,
> God's breath's in the sail!"

Or as sang the blind Scotch poet and preacher:

> "O Cross that liftest up my head,
> I dare not ask to fly from Thee!
> I lay in dust life's glory dead,
> And from the ground there blossoms red
> Life that shall endless be!"

The saving exercise is Prayer. Put it down among the axioms of life, that the

highest blessedness is the result of the activity of our highest faculties. And never does earth rise so high or heaven bend so low as when we pray. Have you seen the sunrise transfigure a mountain? Well, there are things that transfigure life. Love does. Pride does. Hope does. But nothing so transfigures life as prayer.

"We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power!"

The mayor of an American city, who distinguished himself and his administration by high ideals and efficiency in the conduct of public affairs, was asked by a reporter how he was able to resist so heroically the temptations to which he was exposed. He did not hesitate long to reply. Then his voice grew soft as he said, "I pray." Michelangelo, painter, poet, sculptor, architect, once declared, "I put not hand to anything till I have steeped my inmost soul in prayer!" To steep one's soul in prayer. This forges an invulnerable armour. This erects an invincible barrier. Thrice was Charles Kingsley armed,—that prophet of social progress in modern England, whose voice with that of Maurice and that of Robertson heralded

the dawn of a worthier conception of God's Kingdom,—thrice was he armed, when at his altar he cried, "O Divine Justice, make me just! Divine Mercy, make me merciful! Divine Purity, make me pure!"

Lastly, there is an atmosphere that helps to keep the heart pure and the hands clean. It is the atmosphere created by the presence with us of a divine Comrade. There was a German poet who liked to speak of Jesus Christ as "the Great Companion." And He is that. Powerful personalities radiate an atmosphere. His biographer says of Henry Drummond, "When he entered the room, the moral temperature perceptibly rose."

There are thoughts we do not think when Christ's presence is spiritually discerned. Who would meditate evil with the bread and wine of the Holy Communion before him? There are imaginations which take their flight at the very mention of Christ's name.

"One look at that pale suffering Face
Will make us feel the deep disgrace
Of weakness:
We shall be sifted till the strength
Of self-conceit is changed at length
To meekness!"

Do we—dare we—indulge sordid or ungentle thoughts when He is near? Then let us ever keep Him near! For He is able to keep us from falling, to keep us unspotted from the world, and to present us blameless—if not faultless—before His presence with exceeding joy.

IV

Old Passions Turned to New Uses

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?' He saith unto Him, 'Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee.' He saith unto him, 'Feed My lambs.'"

—*John xxi. 15.*

JUST what did Jesus mean when He asked Peter, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Who are "these"? What are they? There are two possible interpretations of the words in question. First, in view of Peter's desire for preëminence, excellent illustration of which we have in the chapter from which the text is taken, it is possible that Jesus meant, "Lovest thou Me more than these other disciples love Me?" Peter was very impulsive, very spectacular. Once he had said, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will I not forsake Thee." It was a generous, loyal thing to say, but it was boastful. It was indirectly a reflection upon the loyalty of others. Peter would be distin-

guished. He fairly aches for distinction. Perhaps Jesus, taking him at his own word, at his own estimate of himself, meant to say, "He that would be preëminent in My discipleship must be preëminent in devotion to Me; and he who would be preëminent in devotion to Me must give himself preëminently to shepherdly service."

But the other possible interpretation of these words is based upon the fact that Peter had been a fisherman by profession before he began to follow Jesus; and after the Crucifixion Peter had gone back to his old calling. There is no occupation which, once followed, has a stronger fascination for those who have engaged in it than gathering the harvest of the sea. Here is the inveterate fisherman, who left for a season his nets and boats in order that he might sit under the instruction of a great Teacher,—and now he has returned to the sea. Here are the implements of his calling. The nets need repairs. The boats need caulking. The sails need patching. If Peter was the man we think he was, he loved his old-time occupation, loved the tools of his trade. (How we do become attached to a skiff, a canoe or a sailboat! How a fisher-

man grows fond of his rods and reels!) Peter was about to return to his old-time vocation. Jesus had other plans for him. He would complete the process of preparation which began three years before when He had said to the fisherman of Galilee, "Follow Me and I will teach you to take men alive." Is it not possible then that Jesus referred to Peter's property,—perhaps his only property,—his boats and nets, when He said, "Lovest thou Me more than these?"

These are the two possible interpretations of this clause of the text. Either is tenable. Whether we adopt one or the other is immaterial and irrelevant to the purpose of this study. Certain it is that if Peter had any lingering love for the profession he had loved, after this interview that love did not exist; or rather, it did exist but was transformed into a passion for souls. Peter became a fisher of men. We may not say that one love had cast out the other, but the old love for fishing found new expression. All the patience, all the cunning, all the adroitness, all the beautiful adventure of fishing, attach to the new career as an apostle of the Saving Faith.

Whichever of these two interpretations we adopt; whether Jesus referred to Peter's passion for preëminence, or to his passion for fishing, Jesus' treatment of Peter illustrates His method of transforming life; He transfigures old affections by setting them upon new objects and by directing them in new channels.

It was so with Matthew. Matthew was an internal revenue collector, an excise commissioner, a customs officer. He was a bookkeeper, an accountant, a business man. He had a passion for accuracy, a genius for detail. One day Jesus came by, saw him, read him, and said, "Follow Me." Matthew follows. He is not disobedient to the heavenly vision. It is Matthew's one great chance, and he takes it. His act illustrates what John Hutton calls "the soul's leap to God." Matthew does not cease to be the bookkeeper, the accountant, the accurate recorder. All that special fitness for writing a biography of Jesus he carries with him over from the customs office into his ministry. The passion of Matthew's life does not subside, but is turned to new uses.

Then there was Saul of Tarsus, a Bourbon

of the Bourbons, worshipper of tradition, narrowest of the narrow, theological hair-splitter, keen-scented heresy-hunter, zealous, very; passionate, very. Saul has a vision at midday. Stung by the splendour of the sight his eyes behold, he is transformed into such an one as Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, the bond-slave of Jesus Christ. But has Saul lost his zeal, his fervour, his fiery ardour? Oh, no. All the faculties and capacities he has exercised as a Pharisee he now exercises as a Christian, but the passion of his life fixes upon a new object. Now he glories only in the Cross. The old enthusiasm has a new object.

I have said this is Christ's method of salvation. It is not the method of Buddha. The Buddhist's dream of salvation is by the ultimate extinction of desire. Jesus' plan is by the transformation of desire.

Human history is rich with instances of the redemption of lives from evil by the transfer of zeal from one object to another. John Hunter tells of a distinguished man who confessed that in early manhood he had found deliverance from a guilty passion through a devoted attachment to a branch of

science. The love of knowledge cured him of the love of pleasure.

Harold Begbie's book, "Twice Born Men," deserves to be very widely read. Harold Begbie was a newspaper man in England who undertook to write up, as a matter of professional journalism, the life histories of a number of men and women in a certain section of London, in which the Salvation Army was particularly active. It was the pottery district, a most unattractive neighbourhood. The unoccupied lots and the back yards of the houses were adorned with broken pottery. Mr. Begbie wrote a brief description of a dozen or more men and women of this section whose lives had been transformed under the inspiration of Salvation Army missionaries. The book was published in England under the title, "Broken Earthenware." Every one of these people had been a wreck. They were in society's slag-heap. Every one of them rose to walk in newness of life. It is a most fascinating story. The author published it as a foot-note to Professor William James' book on "Varieties of Religious Experience." Professor James read Harold Begbie's book and generously said he would

be perfectly willing to regard his book as a foot-note of Harold Begbie's. In one of his chapters Mr. Begbie says a startling thing. It may not appear to be invariably true, but that it is true in many cases there can be no doubt. This is the saying: "The best cure for dipsomania is religious mania." The words, "religious mania," are ill chosen. It is a pity to give a good thing a bad name. What the saying amounts to is this, that one who has had a passion for drink, and who attempts to reform, needs to acquire a still stronger passion for sobriety; he needs to become a temperance reformer. The zeal of the reformer will help to keep him true to his own vows. This saying of Harold Begbie's throws a new light on a saying of Professor Seeley's: "No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic."

John B. Gough and Jerry McAuley both found it so. Jerry McAuley was a lost man if ever a man was lost on earth; thief, "panhandler," bully, sot. He found redemption in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the efficiency of that redemption to keep him a saved man lay in the opportunity he found to be-

come a saviour of other men. He had no time to backslide after he began his career as a missionary to the hopeless and the homeless such as he had once been. He and John B. Gough and all such men have kept their hearts pure by keeping them open to the inflow of a divinely-sent, a divinely-sustained passion. They heard the Master say, "Feed My sheep," and went out in a lifelong search for the lost sheep, the lame sheep, the black sheep of the Father's flock. John Bunyan was a coarse, profane and dissolute youth. When he became a Christian, his safety depended not only upon his believing in Christ but upon his preaching Christ. He maintained his virtue by its enthusiastic practice.

Two great missionary leaders of the Christian church illustrate this same fact of salvation by transformation of desire. Ignatius Loyola and Raymond Lull were both men of pleasure, courtiers, knightly, chivalrous. They loved sport, the society of the gay and rich. They were exquisite "man-milliners," dilettanti, worshippers of trifles, yet soldierly and brave withal. All that old-time devotion to the pursuit of pleasure, all their

former zeal and passion for display, and conquest of feminine hearts, all their love for the world and the lusts thereof, was transfigured by the Spirit of God, by the sight of Christ and His Cross. They kept their hearts pure by keeping them passionately set upon Christ. They preserved their virtue by its very enthusiasm. I think now of a sentiment I once read from some old French philosopher. He said, "O young men, fill your hearts with generous enthusiasms in youth, for we lose so many of them as we grow old." Loyola and Lull lost none of their enthusiasm, and the martyrdom of Raymond Lull, the six hundredth anniversary of which we have just commemorated, occurred when he was an old man, his heart still aflame with the desire to reach the heart of the Moslem world.

Stuart Holden of London tells of a boy who went up from Harrow to Cambridge and filled his apartments with luxurious furnishings. The son of wealthy parents, he indulged his propensity for fine surroundings. He covered the walls of his rooms with gaudy pictures—race-horses and jockeys, actresses and chorus girls. One day that youth met

another man, came to know him and to love him. Most people who met that man did love him. He too was a university man, who had turned aside from a career that promised great distinction to devote himself to the welfare of London's poor. No man of the last generation has had a greater influence over the university men of Great Britain than Quentin Hogg. The whole social settlement movement owes much of its inspiration to him. One day this youth at Cambridge asked Quentin Hogg for his picture, and there came a time when the picture arrived, autographed with a friendly inscription. The young man had it framed and hung it up. Then he looked at the other pictures and somehow they seemed out of place. One by one they came down until only Quentin Hogg's picture remained on the wall. When other pictures took their places they were of a different kind. The transformation had been wrought silently but effectively by the creation of a new ideal, by the transfer of a selfish passion to unselfish ends.

It is a great problem with some young people what books to buy for their libraries. We waste a lot of good money buying indif-

ferent books. Sometimes we squander it by buying books it were better not to read, books that cast a dimness over the pure mirror of the conscience, books that paralyze faith and encourage false freedom of thought and behaviour. Perhaps the best way to weed out a library is to put one really great and good book into it. That book will make the rest of the books look cheap and poor.

Life is governed by the law of love. What we are depends upon what we care for. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "He that loveth is born of God." "God is love." He who loves God with all his heart will not be an indifferent Christian. He who loves his neighbour as himself will be a good neighbour, a friend to the friendless, a cheerer up of the weary.

Christianity is the religion of a Person. The practice of Christianity is simply the practice of the love that flows out from that Person into our hearts, and back from our hearts to that Person. A German philosopher thus defines history: "The outflow of events from God, and the return of the cycle

to Him." This is a good definition of Christianity,—"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." It may be difficult for us to believe in God. It may be increasingly difficult, as our knowledge of physical science increases, for us to believe in God. But we can believe in Christ. He is so near us. He is so like us;—He is our best selves; He is what we would like to be. And it is easy to love Him. What this love will do for us in our lives is suggested by some lines in Tennyson's description of the Knights of the Round Table:

> "He laid on us the deathless passion of his eyes, and made us his;
> He laid his mind on ours, and we believed in his beliefs."

The beginning of the love of Christ is like the beginning of any earthly friendship. Our hearts go out to Him and we say to Him, and He hears, "O Master, let me walk with Thee." Walking with Him, life shifts its center and enlarges its circumference, and in the end of our days we may slip out of our bodies whispering, as poor Joe in Dickens' story, "It is time for me to go to Him who loves me."

V

Life's Vigilant Angel, Fear

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments: His praise endureth forever."—Psalm cxi. 10.

ONE of the most frequent causes of confusion is the double sense of words. An example of this is in the apparently contradictory advice of Scripture with reference to burden-bearing. We read, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." And again we read, "Every man must bear his own burden." And still again we have the invitation, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." Here is a triple use of the same word. It is not the same burden in every case. There are burdens we can help one another bear. There is a burden each of us must bear for himself; to avoid or evade it is to default in the very cardinal qualities of human responsibility;

and there is a burden which no man can bear for himself nor for another,—God alone must bear it. It is the burden of guilt, which Christ alone can relieve us of.

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Again and again He said, "Fear not," and an apostle speaks of the perfect love that casts out fear. And yet no word occurs more frequently in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament in the sense of a virtue than this same word, fear. In this sense it is frequent in the Psalms. Nor is it absent from the New Testament. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are exhorted to pray for grace that we may serve God with reverence and fear. In this text fear is spoken of as the very beginning of wisdom. There can be no true wisdom without it. But it is the reverent fear of God.

It may be useful for us to consider the function of fear in life. In one of Mrs. Alice Meynell's most beautiful essays she speaks of "life's diligent angel, labour; life's inexorable angel, pain; life's vigilant angel, fear." There is no doubt that labour is an angel. Oft-times it is an angel in disguise. There is

no doubt that pain is an angel, and always in disguise. One of our poets puts it thus:

"Angel of Pain, I think thy face
Will be in all that heavenly place
The sweetest face that I shall see,
The swiftest face to smile on me.
Dear patient angel, to thine own
Thou comest and art never known
Till late, in some lone twilight place
The light of thy transfigured face
Sudden shines out, and speechless, they
Know they have walked with God all day."

There is an old proverb, "A burnt child dreads the fire." A child learns to walk by many a hurt. The pain of sickness is benevolent. Pain is not a disease but a symptom of disease. If it were not for the symptom, we might never know the existence of the disease until the diseased organ is destroyed. "Life's vigilant angel, pain." Pain is a sentinel. He who planned these wonderful bodies of ours stationed at innumerable outposts a host, an army of faithful, watchful, sleepless sentinel nerves. And yet there are no nerves of pain. There are nerves of sensation, and the selfsame nerves that bring us pain bring us pleasure as well. These sentinel soldiers vastly amuse and please us at times.

Now in the realm of morals fear has exactly the same office that pain has in the realm of the senses. There are things we ought to be afraid of, and must be afraid of, if we would keep our souls from harm. What are some of them? Perhaps they are all included in the general term, evil. If you will add one letter to "evil" you make it "devil." A witty woman in Boston a number of years ago wrote, "We in Boston have discovered that there is no devil, but somehow or other business goes on as usual at the old stand." Another writer has said, "We are no longer afraid of the devil, and in the place of wholesome fear of the evil one we have grown foolishly afraid of germs; germs are our modern devil." Whether we regard evil as the manifold work of an ubiquitous malevolent personality, or whether we regard it impersonally, the only attitude for moral beings to assume towards it is that of wholesome fear.

The man in Browning's poem, who purports to describe the conduct of Lazarus after he had come back from a four days' residence in the spirit-world, remarks how Lazarus was troubled, actually terrified, when

he saw on the faces of little children expressions indicative of certain bad propensities. Before his visit to the spirit-world, such things had only mildly disturbed him, if at all, but now he saw them in the light of eternity, and falsehood and impurity seemed vastly more dreadful than they had ever seemed before. Perhaps if we could get one glimpse of life in the white light of eternity, there are a thousand things we now regard with tolerance, even if we do not sanction them, that we should loathe with unutterable loathing.

The finely educated ear of the musician is pained by discordant sounds. The trained taste of the artist leads him to wince at the mere sight of ugliness. Ah, if our moral senses were but as acute as these, how we should shrink from deceit, from duplicity, from dissembling, from vulgarity, from irreverence, from profanity, from moral obliquity of every kind! And how we should pity with immeasurable sorrow spiritual poverty!

Paul was a brave man. It needs no argument to prove that. He who suffered shipwreck, confronted mobs, endured hardness, fought with wild beasts at Ephesus and defied

the mandates of Cæsar was no coward, but he was afraid,—always afraid lest having saved others, he himself might be a castaway.

How is it possible for one of noble purpose such as Paul's, and of indomitable will, to become a castaway? It is possible. Human history attests the fact. More than one apostle has made shipwreck of faith. More than one saint has fallen away and put his Lord to open shame. More than one sincere and useful servant of God has fallen from his high estate of fellowship with saints. What has happened? How has the defection begun? In one or other of three ways.

The soul has three inveterate enemies. No fire can consume them or flood drown them. They are "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life." Jesus' three temptations represent the things that work havoc in our lives, and consequently the things that we must learn to fear. First was the appeal to appetite; second, to pride, and third to the desire for power. What salvation is there for us when such forces assail our souls,—our bodies and our souls? There is nothing better than fear, a wholesome distrust of ourselves, a consciousness that we have within

us the capacity and hence the liability to fall. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

How shocking it is to hear, as we do now and then, of the ruin of a reputation, of the discovery of secret vices, of dishonour, of violated trust on the part of some one who has stood high in the esteem of his employers and of the world. Depend upon it, the fall was not a sudden one. Little by little the fabric of that manhood had been weakened by compromise; little by little the foundations of that character had been undermined by indulgence; little by little the ideals of that life had deteriorated. It is the tragedy of the mountain oak. Long years ago a pioneer, in blazing his path over the mountain, chopped from that tree a deeper chip than he intended. The tree was wounded. With sun and rain and melting snow and beaks of birds and squirrels' teeth, the wound deepened and grew until the process of decay reached the heart of the oak. Then a storm swept over the mountain and the giant fell. A timberman looking at it said, "That tree had a bad heart." Well, many a man of fair exterior is corrupt at heart. Storms of

passion find such men unable to stand. A sudden appeal to selfishness or to covetousness or to avarice, and a life lies low. "Keep thy heart! Keep thy heart," says the admonishing Word; "Keep it with all diligence, for out of it are the issue of life." Fear the first approach of evil. Fear the first shrewd suggestion that there may be profit in wickedness. Fear the cunning invitation to participate in the pleasures of sin for a season; your fear will save you from immortal loss.

Again and again the love of a worthy object has cured a heart of an unworthy love. Quite as often fear of the right sort has cured a heart of ignoble fear. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," is a saying of one of the Hebrew proverbial philosophers. There is no other cure for servile fear of man except in fear of God. One of General "Chinese" Gordon's biographers speaks of him as having come to a supreme disregard for the babbling and blatant voices that we take for fame, and to a supreme indifference to praise. It was exactly that quality which made him the hero that he was. But it was not an abstract quality; it was the fruit in him of a wholesome fear lest he dishonour

God by honouring too much the judgments of men.

Health specialists remind us that we should all consult our physicians frequently and be examined as to our physical condition, regardless of our feelings. Unquestionably many a disease which has its beginning insidiously might be conquered if attacked in time. Shall we take such exquisite care of our bodies and take no care of our souls? Shall we not consult frequently the Great Physician, and submit ourselves to His scrutiny? His spirit searcheth the depths of our spirits, and in His light the beginnings of evil are clearly discerned. Bible Study and Prayer,—Prayer and the Scriptures,—Prayer while we read the Scriptures, this way to the "consulting room!"

And prayer is not always speech. It may be but adoring silence. But how often "through the silence comes a Voice." It may be but the reverent submission of a soul to the inspection of the great Specialist, even as the penitent psalmist prayed, "Search me, try me!"

There is a verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews which indicates that one of the dead-

liest enemies of our souls is the habit,—yet not so much a habit as an habitude, which is to say, an habitual attitude—of drifting purposelessly with the current of popular religious life. Unconsciously we lose our moorings. The drift of the age may be away from spirituality. There may be a popular reaction from what is called Puritanism. People about us may hold spiritual things in light esteem. There may be nobody near with whom we may converse frankly about the things of the soul; and as a result, often before we know it, we are far from the familiar landmarks of strong personal faith. Many a soul is lost that way. It did not deliberately choose evil. It did not studiedly reject the light. It needed only life's vigilant angel, fear,—nay, God's vigilant angel, fear, to keep it bound to Him and to His grace and truth.

To review, these are the things we have to fear; the fear of God means fear of these: the imperceptible approach of evil, the gradual conquest and occupancy by other powers and forces, secular, sensuous, temporal, of those spheres of life which belong and ought forever to belong to God; the loss, by moral

leakage, of resisting power; the weakening, by indulgence of imagination or desire, of those moral qualities which are the deep intrenchments of the soul; and the loosening of our spiritual anchorages by slothful and indolent conformity in mind and type to the debased ideals of our time or of our neighbourhood or of our social set.

There is a close connection between fear and conscience. "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all," says Hamlet. Yes, but God's cowards. And of all noble spirits, the noblest are "God's fools" and "God's cowards."

Many a man has seen days when he would have chosen death, if it had not been for his accountability to God for the use of life. He dared not quench the fire within which God kindled. Dared not?

> "I dare do all which doth become a man.
> Who dares do more is none!"

It was a saying of Sidney Smith, "He who fears ridicule is at the mercy of every fool." "Fear God and naught else" is the motto of one of the noble Scotch families. "I will fear no evil," says the shepherd-psalmist—

and he means he will fear no calamity. Death lies before him, but he does not fear it. Why should he? It is the pilgrim's pathway home. "What can separate us from the love of God?" asks the Apostle. Then he enumerates the things most of us fear. The fear of God has cured him of all other fear. So may it be with us. Then when falls the darkness—darkness of advancing age, or poverty, or peril of any kind, we shall say, "God, whom we fear with minds all free from fear of circumstance, our Father is, our Father and our Saviour and our Ever-present Friend!"

VI

A Day in Nazareth

"And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up: and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read."—Luke iv. 16.

THERE are three places to which Jesus need not have gone. He might have remained away from them and the world would have called Him a prudent man. To go to either of these three places was to invite trouble. But He went. "He must needs go." He was under the compulsion of the Spirit. He could not have remained away and retained His own self-respect or the approval of His Father. His going proves His courage. The philosopher who defined courage as "the love of the morally beautiful more than life," described one of the characteristic traits of our Lord. Not only had He an ample soul, a soul of far horizons, but He had a fearless soul, a soul

serene in the face of facts and forces which would have daunted another.

Jerusalem was the first of the three places Jesus would not have visited had He consulted only His own welfare. That was the center of the enemy's country. The ecclesiasticism which He antagonized with the very spirit of His Gospel had its seat of power there. The priests were no friends of His. The Pharisees and scribes were hostile. The Herodians and Zealots alike were suspicious of Jesus' motives. Doubtless Jesus had some friends in and about Jerusalem but they were far outnumbered by enemies. Yet "He set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem." It is no wonder that a gifted young Japanese student at Yale, when asked what feature of Jesus' life most impressed him at his first reading of the New Testament, answered, "Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem."

Samaria was another place Jesus might have prudently avoided. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. The origin of the race hatred that existed between these two peoples is lost in the mists of early tradition, but Josephus in his "Antiquities" throws much light upon the state of mind of

both Jews and Samaritans about this time. A Samaritan had defiled the Jewish temple on Mount Zion by scattering human bones therein. A Jew had evened the score by setting fire to the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. The two temples were rival establishments. Religious prejudices, differences of opinion based upon religious dogmas and practices, lie very deep in the human heart and are next to immovable. He is a bold, not to say a reckless, man who ignores such barriers. Yet Jesus ignored them, and went through Samaria as though it were the most natural thing in the world for Him to do. It was. When did He ever turn back from obstacles? When did a difficulty ever daunt Him? "Difficulties become problems only to those who endeavour to solve them." Not only race prejudice and class prejudice, but sex prejudice Jesus absolutely ignored. At a time when, even in Greece, for a woman to be learned was to lose her reputation, Jesus expounded His profoundest philosophy of spiritual worship to a woman, an alien woman, a woman who was "no better than the law allowed." I do not know what you call that, but I call it superb courage.

The third place from which Jesus might have remained away, in view of all the circumstances, was Nazareth. There He was brought up. There He was remembered as a barefoot boy, a child of obscure birth, a manual labourer, who had dared to enter upon a career of public teaching without the sanction of the schools. No prophet has honour in his own country. It is the tragedy of familiarity. "What? That man great? He learned, distinguished, successful? He a judge, a journalist, an orator, a leader of men? Impossible! Why, I used to know him." (The argument being, evidently, that any man I used to know cannot possibly be great!)

At the unveiling of the statue of a literary man abroad some years ago, an American visitor said to the aged widow of the man his nation honoured, "What an inexpressible privilege you had to know him so intimately, to listen to his table talk." Perhaps we may forgive her, knowing the childishness of old age, for replying, "Yes, I suppose so, but his table manners weren't always nice." The tragedy of familiarity. He is hero indeed who is a hero to his valet, to his grocer, to

the policeman on his beat, to the conductor of the car he daily rides in, to the waiter at his restaurant. William Winter writes of Shakespeare:

> "The folk who lived in Shakespeare's day,
> And saw that gentle spirit pass
> By London Bridge, the frequent way,
> They little knew what man he was."

Jesus' own brother James did not believe in His Messiahship until after the crowning miracle of the resurrection. Perhaps there was just one person in Nazareth who did believe in that wonderful Boy, that still more wonderful Man, and she kept her faith unspoken in her heart,—the mother who, almost alone, knew the secret of that marvellous birth.

Back to Nazareth where He was brought up, to confront the sluggish minds and prejudiced hearts of His old neighbours, went this Man of will inflexible. He was always doing things and saying things that required heroic will. He was always going where it demanded faith and virtue (in the old Latin sense) to go. He faced the demoniac among the tombs. He touched the leper. He dared

to drive out of the temple the sacrilegious merchants who had made His Father's house a den of thieves.

The compassionate Christ, the merciful Christ, the tender-hearted Christ, you will find in art. But this is the leonine Christ, the conquering Christ, the invincible warrior of righteousness. What is the secret of it all? Duty. That was His great word. It shone before Him like a star when He was a lad of twelve and spoke about His Father's business. It lighted up His pathway to the Jordan when at the baptismal altar He fulfilled all righteousness. It guided Him from province to province and from river to coast, across mountains and over deserts, as He became a minister to many. Duty, conscience, the moral imperative, the Father's will, the still small voice,—this it was that made His life glorious not alone with passive goodness but with active and universal benevolence, the memory of which can never die. That beautiful, dutiful life rises before us in vision to-day like a flowery island in the midst of a desolate sea. "The bright mirror of Jesus' soul reflected only light,"—the light of duty, undimmed by thought of self or safety.

Now that Jesus is at Nazareth, on the Sabbath day, let us see what He does. He enters the synagogue. He worships. He reads the Scriptures of the Old Covenant. So we learn that Jesus was a Sabbath-keeper, a church-goer, a Bible reader. Consider these facts:

He was a Sabbath-keeper. He was Lord of the Sabbath, and yet His attitude towards the Sabbath was that of the humblest child of God. He could have commanded, but He chose to obey. Indeed He proved His right to command by His willingness to obey. Shall His example be lost on us? Is there not peril that we have come to hold the Sabbath all too lightly? With our week-end parties, our joy-riding, and our pleasure-seeking, the Sabbath of our fathers is slipping away from us, with much of its sanctity and practically all of its quiet. The newspapers, every Monday morning, are filled with accounts of accidents, drownings, automobile collisions and the like. We have turned a holy day into a holiday, and considering our temptations, it is remarkable that so many of our young people still remain true to the spirit of our Sabbath-keeping ancestors.

There is small probability of any partnership between church and state in America. In our anxiety to get away from anything that savours of an established religion, we are likely to get away from religion, unless it be held by the individual with inflexible purpose and with devout loyalty.

Jesus was a church-goer. There were three reasons at least why He need not have gone to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. He was a weary man; He knew how empty was the religious formalism of the synagogue, and He had unbroken fellowship with the Father without the employment of ceremonial aids to spiritual communion. Yet He goes into the synagogue. Duty leads Him there. He cannot be our perfect example and remain away. Moreover, opportunity invites Him, for there the people are assembled and there they will listen to any voice that has a message of moral or religious value. Let busy, weary people remember that Jesus did not regard His burdened life and His exhausted strength a sufficient excuse for non-attendance at the place of prayer. Let critical people, and people of superior spiritual attainments, remember that

the Son of God Himself employed an imperfect institution, the unsatisfactory symbols of the church of His day, in the worship of the Infinite. Are we following Jesus? Then let us follow Him into the place of public worship. Aside from any question of our need, there is the question of our following Him, the question of our faith in His faith, our belief in His belief.

We are not without high human examples in the matter of Sabbath-keeping and church-going. A distinguished journalist, in his "Letters to a Workingman," pleads for the habit of church-going among labouring men. He testifies that he, a literary man, accustomed to the society of books and learned people, has derived more literary inspiration from the services of the sanctuary than from any other one source. Moreover, he points to the practical value of church-going in the significant saying, "I find I need a moral bath about once a week."

Moreover, Jesus read the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth that day. Oh, to have been there! Oh, to have heard His voice interpreting the words of Isaiah! What would we not give to have heard Shake-

speare read the soliloquy in Hamlet, or to have heard Tennyson read "In Memoriam," or to have heard Browning read "Prospice"? Vastly more would we give to have heard Jesus read that prophecy of Isaiah which most clearly points to Himself. Do I speak of something that is impossible? Not so far as Jesus is concerned. He is still on earth. He is still with His people and never so near, never so intimately near, as when they read the Scriptures concerning Him. He joined the two disciples on their way to Emmaus while they were talking of Him. He joins every company of disciples whenever they think of Him or long for Him. He is the Interpreter of His own Book. The Spirit of Jesus is the cryptogram, the secret cipher, the intimate code, the possession of which gives us insight into the heart of the mysteries of the written Word. The presence of Jesus with us in the reading of the Word gives insight into many an otherwise dark chapter, a farsight through many a dim vista of time past and of time that is still to come.

If the Bible is a dead, dry book to us, it is because we have not discerned the presence in it of a Living Person. Christ is in the

Old Testament as well as the New, waiting to be discovered—and thenceforth to be an aid to discovery.

What light these words of Isaiah, read by the Master that day in the synagogue, throw on that most important question, "Why did Jesus come into the world"? We have great respect for philosophers and theologians who have answered this question variously,—for those who say that Jesus came to prove the love of God, and for those who say that He came to make atonement for the sins of men, and for those who say that He came to show us how divine may be our lives, to be the type of our ultimate earthly development. Let us accept all these, but if we would have the best answer to the question, let us go to Jesus Himself. He must ever be the highest critic concerning His own words and works. Why did Jesus come? Why is He on earth still? What is He doing here? We have the highest authority for the answer. Here it is, from the lips of Jesus Himself. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the cap-

tives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

So Jesus went to Nazareth and worshipped with His old neighbours that day. So He addressed them. Most that He said is not recorded here. He must have said much that is not set down in the Book. The effect produced by His presence and His discourse is such that we may safely judge the character of what He said. The people were indignant. They rose up and would have cast Him out. Just for the reading of those words from Isaiah? Oh, no. Doubtless He rebuked their narrowness and pride. Doubtless He reproved them for their unbelief and exhorted them to penitence. Doubtless He had much to say such as He said in the Sermon on the Mount. They felt that He had indicted and accused them. They were pricked in their hearts. Their personal and professional prejudices were aroused; so they rejected Him. They must have known of His miracles of healing. They had themselves listened to His equally wonderful teaching. Yet they rejected Him and had He not escaped, would probably have stoned Him to

death. Doubt not His rejection in His own home town caused Him many a heartache. He was human as well as divine. He had pride. Praise and approval were dear to Him. This was a crucifixion of His spirit, prophetic of that crucifixion of the flesh which was ere long to follow, in Jerusalem.

Why did the Nazarenes reject Jesus? For no better reason than those for which we reject Him. And we reject Him whenever we prefer present ease to future good; whenever we let the body lord it over the flesh; whenever we follow the line of the least resistance morally, surrender spiritual power, and renounce our heavenly inheritance; whenever we choose the easy path, and let the phantom success lure us from the straight and narrow way; whenever we listen to the tempter's voice that says, in the face of deadly sin, "Thou shalt not surely die," and whenever we give dominion to the forces that are clearly of the earth earthy in competition with the forces that are of the spirit spiritual. Rejecting Jesus thus, whom do we reject? Friend and succourer of our souls; earth's incarnate wonder; heaven's interceding Lord; the one Name given under heaven or among men

whereby we must be saved. Rejecting Him, we turn away from honour and glory and immortality. The story of this text has no greater present lesson than this: In the choices of every day, in the judgments of every hour, we are choosing or rejecting Christ. Before this day is over we shall befriend Him, or cast Him out. Pray God we may not be blind to the heavenly vision and deaf to the heavenly voice in the day of our visitation.

VII

If Thou Knewest

"If thou knewest the gift of God."—John iv. 10.

IF we would see Jesus at His best as a teacher and as a tactician, if we would see the value He places on the human soul, on any soul, just because it is a soul; if we would see His preëminence as a reformer; if we would see how He rose above prejudice, race prejudice, class prejudice, sex prejudice, how He conquered prejudice by ignoring it; if we would see how Jesus led a soul out and on and up from a narrow bigotry to a tolerant spirituality, then this is the chapter for us to read.

Having read it, let us forget the circumstance, forget the human personality involved in it, and address ourselves to a single saying of the Divine Personality who, after all, is the chief figure of value for us. Jesus asked for a drink of water. The woman wondered that He, apparently a Jew, should ask a favour of a Samaritan. He

said, "If thou knewest the gift of God and who I am, thou wouldst have asked of Me and I would have given thee living water."

"If thou knewest!" Of all sad words, the saddest are not, "It might have been." The essence of tragedy is in this little word of two letters—"if." "If thou knewest." How much we miss by ignorance,—how much we all miss! Illustrations rush in to embarrass us by their very number.

Gold was not discovered in California until 1849, but the gold had been there for millenniums. America was not discovered until the end of the fifteenth century. Mariners had hugged the coasts of Europe and Africa for centuries, afraid to venture far, until the compass was invented. Constantinople need not have fallen in 1453 had Constantine Palæologus known that the new compound known as gunpowder was at his command.

How many women sewed themselves blind, stitched their hearts into the garments they made, before Elias Howe gave the world the sewing machine! How many lives were lost before surgery developed into the almost miraculous art as we know it! How many tortured sufferers before anes-

thesia! How many gangrened wounds before asepsis! How many deaths from consumption because we did not know how to cure it and how to prevent it! How many are dying now, of cancer, and of infantile paralysis, because we do not know how to deal with these mysterious diseases! We shall know presently, and then the world will think of us and say, "How much they missed by not knowing!"

In a certain prison a man lay awaiting the execution of the death sentence. If he could only get the governor's ear, he would plead for a commutation, he would explain. The warden brought a visitor through the corridor. The visitor stopped at this prisoner's cell, asked a question or two, received swift, curt answers, and passed on. It was not until the next day the condemned man learned that the visitor was the governor. Vain regrets. "If I had only known!"

There are men about us who are under sentence of death—slowly dying, dying before their time, dying of broken laws of health, and there are bitter hours when they reflect, "If I had only known! If some one had only told me!"

But those of us who have lived long know quite well that death is not the saddest thing on earth. It may seem so, but it is not so. There are lives that are infinitely worse than death,—lives out of which love and truth and faith have gone, and from such hearts the cry ascends, "Oh, if we had only known!"

The gifts of health and wealth and friendship we miss by ignorance are legion. But these are not earth's best possessions. These are indeed gifts of God, but there is THE Gift of God, and myriads miss it by not knowing.

Joseph McCracken, idol of the football field at the University of Pennsylvania, who took a thorough course in medicine and surgery, and rejecting offers of enticing promise at home, went to China because of China's deep need of Christian doctors, said it never dawned upon him how great was China's need until he saw its largest city, Canton, with its myriads of people, and observed at almost every step men and women labouring under fearful disadvantage for lack of adequate medical and surgical care. The blind from cataract could receive their sight again if they knew. The little children with con-

genital hip dislocation could run and leap if they knew. But when he looked more deeply he saw that profounder needs than these are there. The care-burdened soul might drop his burden and bear away a song; the sin-fevered soul might feel the cooling touch of a Saviour's hand; the disconsolate mourner might lift up his heart in hope; the unsatisfied heart might find rest and the groping spirit might find light,—if they knew—if they knew—the gifts of God.

For God has gifts for us,—"peace, perfect peace in this dark world of sin;" release from guilt-consciousness; wings with which to rise above the bitterness and vexation of life, and courage to face the bleakest or the blackest day with eyes that behold "the light that never was on land or sea." And all of these are included in THE Gift of God, which is nothing that God can confer upon us, and nothing that God can do for us, but the Presence of God with us. This is life eternal, to know God and to know Him as near, very near, now.

N-O-W-H-E-R-E spells two words, "no where" and "now here." How do we pronounce it? If we knew, it should be "now

here." This is the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,—God with us. And this is the essence of His religion, the practice of the presence of God.

But we cannot practice a thing we do not recognize, much less a thing we do not know. Do we know that Jesus is here now just as really as He was with the disciples on the Mount? Do we know that He is saying to us, "Give Me a place in your thoughts and in your hearts"? He is. He is. And all His gifts await only our appreciation.

In the dry-farming districts of the West, where irrigation canals bring the water to the edge of the grain field or the orchard, the farmer has little channels dug through his fields up to the canal. There is a gateway. When the crops need moisture all he has to do is to open the gateway. The lifting of a lever brings the river to his vineyard or garden. The lifting of a lever brings all the resources of the Infinite into our lives. Paul lifted it, and in the consciousness of new supplies of grace cried out, "I can do all things through the strengthening Christ." In a recent book by Philip I. Roberts, entitled "The Dry-Dock of a Thousand Wrecks," but

which, some one has suggested, should be called "Out of the Depths," he tells the story of ten men, every one a hopeless, helpless outcast, who in a single place—the Water Street Mission in New York—laid hold on that lever and rose to walk in newness of life, "above the world and sin, with heart made pure and garments white, and Christ enthroned within."

But the highest of the high need to know and have the gift of God quite as much as the lowest of the low. The hearts of men do not differ half so much as their clothes. And the need of the human heart is God, and Christ is God offering Himself to the heart of man, offering Himself as Counsellor and Comforter, Guide and Guard, Sweetness and Light, Succour and Deliverance. This is the gift of God—and Paul says it is the free gift. "The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But is "free gift" not tautology?—If a gift, of course it is free. Oh, no. We pay high prices for some gifts. And we would pay a high price for this if it were purchasable.

What pilgrimages would we not make! What penances would we not pay! What

prayer wheels would we not turn! What gold and jewels would we not offer, if eternal life could be secured thereby! But it cannot. There is but one way to secure it—the lifting of the lever.

Is the parable not plain? The lever is Prayer. And all that we miss by not knowing, we miss—even if we do know—by not asking! "If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have asked." The greatest unused force in the church? Nay—rather, the greatest unused force in the universe is prayer. We were defeated in our struggle with self last week because we did not pray. We sank under the wave of trouble because we did not pray. We missed the way when we came to the parting of the ways because we did not pray. We face what we call "the apparent unreality of religion" because we do not pray. We are staggering under an unrelieved burden because we do not pray. We are poor in spiritual goods because we have not asked! We have no sense of God's nearness because we do not ask for it. We go into the thick of the fight unarmed and unarmoured, because we fail to ask for the arms and the armour.

Let us stop asking for toys and tops and red apples and smooth paths and easy times; let us stop asking for the pebbles to be taken out of our paths, stop asking for mere things, for chattels, for mere collateral, and ask to be made strong men and women, by the gift of His own indwelling. He who asked of old, "What advantage have I if I pray to Him?" missed the whole meaning of prayer. What advantage? What profit? What gain? Why, we have Him!

Let us change the figure. Here is a man in a boat. The boat is out in a stream. The boat is tied to a stake on the shore. How shall he get ashore? Let him take hold of the rope and pull. That is prayer. But that is not all of prayer. Our souls are not pulling towards a dead stake on a barren shore. We are tied to another boat, and there is a Man in that boat holding the rope, and He is always pulling us towards Him. A Man? Yea, and a God! Our prayers are only half the work. God is working for us, working towards us, and if we knew,—the waves of thought which separate us from God to-day would part right speedily, and the gift of God, the supreme gift of God,

would pass into our possession at once and forever.

Mr. Gilder, poet and editor, who so recently left us, saw a book entitled, "The Passing of Christ," and wrote:

"Behold Him now where He comes!
Not the Christ of our subtle creeds,
But the light of our hearts, of our homes,
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs,
The brother of want and blame,
The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
All passions of mortal ken.

* * * * *

Ah, no, thou life of the heart,
Never shalt thou depart!
Not till the leaven of God
Shall lighten each human clod;
Not till the world shall climb
To thy height serene, sublime,
Shall the Christ who enters our door
Pass to return no more."

VIII

The Saving Few

"And there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched."

—1 Samuel x. 26.

THE early history of Israel is full of peculiar interest. It is the record of the development of a people in the science of self-government. So long as a race is in its childhood, it needs no elaborate system of government and is capable of no such government, the purpose of government, the protection of life, liberty and property, being secured by the operation of the primal elements of force and fear. But as the race rises towards manhood, and as its interests become more complex, some form of organized government becomes necessary. The beginning of government is usually a very simple form of organization. There is first a group of families, forming a tribe or clan. Each group has its head, each clan its chief. There is no nation; the nation is

simply an aggregation of little heterogeneous governments. There is no bond of union, no cohesive principle. War breaks out between the tribes or clans and they slaughter one another mercilessly.

As time goes on, however, and as the people of a given territory suffer from the aggressions of alien tribes or races, for purposes of protection the tribes combine, and some one man comes forward to lead them all. In the hour of victory over the alien tribes, some one cries out, "Let us crown the man who led us into battle, and make him chief over all." It is done, and as the years go by, the union of tribes is cemented more and more closely into a federation, and there is something very like a kingdom. So Cæsar rose to power. So have most of the great founders of empire ascended the throne.

In the first Book of Samuel we find Israel, who for four hundred years needed no king, clamouring for a king, not so much because they need a king as because the surrounding nations have kings and they aspire to be like their neighbours. For four hundred years Israel had been under the peculiar guidance of the King of Kings. In times of danger

deliverance had come through some such genius as Gideon or Deborah. God was their great Defender, but God is never without some human agent to accomplish His will among men. In one age God chooses Cyrus, and in another age Charles Martel; in one age Gustavus Adolphus and in another William of Orange; in one age a Washington and in another age a Lincoln. God always has timber growing in His forest wherewith to make a vessel's keel or form a battering ram.

Now that Israel is demanding a king, God gives them one, and his name is Saul. The method of his choosing is here related. They are wise in consulting a prophet as to the selection of their monarch. They have great faith in Samuel's wisdom, for he has shown himself both a faithful prophet and a just judge. The world has changed in many ways since the day when Israel committed the electorate to Samuel. In many ways the world has improved. But in this respect we might make better progress by going backward,—by regarding the choice of rulers as a religious act. Political meetings are sometimes opened with prayer, but I have never

yet heard that a ballot box has been opened with prayer! Please do not misunderstand me. I would not advocate a suffrage limited by ecclesiastical tests. Nor would I commit to the clergy the authority to crown and uncrown, to call and recall magistrates. But it has come to pass in these days that the power which elects and selects the agents of civil government is wielded quite largely by men who have no conception of the sacredness of the functions of civic authority. It is almost everywhere true among us that caucuses and primaries are in the hands of irresponsible men. This is especially true in the most populous sections of our large cities. There are indeed exceptions. The scholar and the gentleman, the man of culture and the man of character, are beginning to feel much more at home in politics than was once the case. Churchmen are beginning to see more clearly that the fault is theirs if incapable aldermen or corrupt legislators or venal judges are elevated to office.

Perhaps some critic is already saying, "But the choice of Saul was an unfortunate one though directed by a prophet." So it may seem. Saul miserably failed and his sun

went down in darkness. But let us remember, the Eye that sees all and the Mind that knows all, saw and knew Saul, and God said, "Saul is the man." And he was,—an unspoiled, valiant and devout man, a born leader, the very man and the only man who could hold the half-formed but rapidly forming nation in his hand. If Saul failed; if he made shipwreck of faith; if, as has been suggested, the cares of state weighed so heavily upon him that he fell a prey to a melancholia which ended in madness, charge it not to Samuel, charge it not to God; it was the failure of a strong but willful man who started right but went wrong.

And if Saul failed to do all he should have done, if he disappointed Samuel and sank into the grave of an irresolute and vanquished man, charge it not to the lack of good counsel, for, as the text informs us, "There went with him (at the beginning of his reign) a band of men whose hearts God had touched."

All that these words mean we cannot say. But we may be sure of this, that the hearts which had been God-touched were patriots, sincere lovers of Israel; they were devout men who looked to the Divine Spirit for

guidance and for grace; they were loyal friends, capable of strong attachment to each other and to their king. What a band of men that must have been! Not great men, it may be, and not saints, but good men, strong men, brave men, men of conviction and heroic action. They were not many,—a little band, but the future of Saul depended upon his fidelity to them, and the hope of Israel was in the increase of their influence and their kind.

Blessed is the man who, when dark days come; when every blade of grass turns into a serpent and every serpent develops fangs, —happy is the man who then has beside him a little band of men whose hearts God has touched. David had such a band to support him. So had Elijah. And blessed is the nation which, in a crisis; in the presence of foes without or within, when the great mob, unthinking as the swine of Gadara, is ready to rush down a steep place into the sea,—happy the nation that has such a little band. Their common sense will hold the realm in awe. Their courage will defeat the conspiracies of the enemy. Their faith will pierce the dark horizon of the future, and speak of glorious

things to come. A little band of men whose hearts God has touched has always been the saving leaven of society, the purifying salt of the earth, the radiating light of the world.

If we remember this it will help us to read history. The human saviours of the race have always been a little company. How many were there in Gideon's band when the Midianites threatened the overthrow of Israel? Not half a modern regiment. How many were there who held the pass at Thermopylæ? A little band. How many were they who delayed the inrushing hordes of Germany at Liege? A little band. And this is true of moral movements as well. The first disciples of our Lord were only twelve. The church at Pentecost numbered but a hundred and a score. And when the dark ages came, succeeded by middle ages almost as dark, the hope of the pure Gospel, the germ of Protestantism, was preserved in the breasts of a few whose knees would bow before no other Master and whose tongues would confess no other Name than Christ as the Church's Head.

Count over the names of the reformers, Savonarola in Florence, Huss in Bohemia,

Wycliffe in England, Zwinglius in Switzerland, Luther, Melancthon and Erasmus in Germany, and who are they? A little band of men whose hearts God had touched. He touched their hearts and some spoke, and some wrote and some translated. And all laboured for the rights of men and for the untrammelled grace and glory of God.

A hundred and eighty years ago in an English university there was a little band of students whose hearts God had touched to hunger for holiness, to divine dissatisfaction with themselves and divine discontent with current religious conditions. They were from humble walks in life, not a prince or duke or lord among them, and at first there were but three. Presently the three had grown to five and the five to seventeen. They were spoken of contemptuously as "The Holy Club," "The Godly Club," "Bible Moths" and "Supererogation Men." Sometimes they were dignified with the name "Enthusiasts." By a few they were called the "Reform Club." One of them was a statesman whose name was John; another was his brother Charles, a poet and musician, and a third was the greatest orator of his

day, whom David Garrick often went to hear, and whom all who heard honoured as a man of God. This third man crossed the ocean thirteen times, and at last worn out by travel and by labour, laid his weary body down to rest at Newburyport, Massachusetts, where it lies beneath the pulpit of the Congregational Church. John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield were the leaders of a little band of men whose hearts God had touched. No less a historian than Froude declares that the movement which they started redeemed England from a reign of terror.

A little over a century ago, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, the site of Williams College, there was a little band of men whose hearts God had touched to longing for the world's evangelization. In the friendly shelter of a haystack they met for prayer and counsel, and in one of these meetings they dedicated themselves to the rescue of the heathen world. At first there were but five, but out of that group sprang a similar group at Andover, and in that second group was Adoniram Judson, the apostle to Burma. One of that little company died on the coast of Af-

rica. Two died of cholera and their dust mingles with the soil of India. Another also died in India, and Adoniram Judson, like Thomas Coke, one of Wesley's coadjutors, was buried at sea. Great names are these, Mills, Hall, Newell, Richards, Judson.

In 1844 there met in a dingy room in London a little band of men whose hearts God had touched to sympathy with the desolate and morally destitute life of London clerks. They were clerks, and they knew the barren life of their fellows, and the temptability of the youth away from home in a great city. So they organized a society which at first was called the Society for the Promotion of Morals and Religion Among Young Men Engaged in the Draper's Trade. This society later developed into the Young Men's Christian Association, which has belted the globe with Christian fellowship and faith. The purpose of the Association has been nowhere better stated than in the language of one of its own leaders, "To introduce men to Christ, to build men up in Christ, to set them to work for Christ."

About forty years ago, in Kumamoto, Japan, in a boys' high school, there was a lad

whose heart God had touched. He had found Christ, but was afraid to confess Him. One day, however, he confided his secret to another student as they walked about the campus, and his heart leaped for joy when he found a sympathetic response. They talked to other boys until the number of Christians among them increased to forty. Then they made public confession of their faith, but the school authorities were much displeased, and discontinued the school. That looked like failure, but it is no failure when the wind bursts a ripened seed pod and the seeds are scattered by friendly winds over a thousand fertile fields. The dispersion of these young disciples only disseminated more widely the new faith, and not a few of that little band are to-day among the leaders of the Christian Church in Japan.

It never fails. Some such band of God-touched hearts is at the human source of every important religious movement of the ages. The unit of power in every case is a single man whose heart God has touched. The single man at Oxford was John Wesley, at Williams College was Samuel Mills, in London was George Williams. The history

of every significant movement in the realm of morals will read like this: God touched the heart of one man or one woman,—a woman like Jane Addams or Frances Willard or Mary Lyon—God touched one life, and that life drew around it a second and a third, and so the sacred influence spread, a holy fire unquenched and unquenchable.

A significant and comprehensive saying is this,—God had touched their hearts. It means the Divine Spirit had touched the key of all motive, the spring of all conduct. In touching their hearts, God touched their lips to speak, their minds to think, their wills to act; He touched their eyes, giving them new powers to see things in new relations, new correlations, and a new unity; He touched their hands, strengthening them to war a good warfare; He touched their feet, armouring them to walk strange, hard highways of duty. When God touches a human heart He recreates that life. He gives us no new faculties, but turns all the old faculties to new and nobler uses. He gives us new light, new hope, new vigour. He shifts life's center from self to Christ. And there is nothing in the world we need so much as that. Aa-

sociation with Christ, identification with Him, participation in His spiritually imparted impulses, will make new men and women of us all. An unhappy woman said to her physician, "I am utterly miserable and dejected; all my friends are out of town." And he, a modern Luke, replied, "I have a Friend who never leaves me." He of whom the physician spoke is He who speaks to us, who touches our hearts and says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end,"—unto the end of the last day of earthly labour and the last gleam of earthly light.

IX

The Law of Liberty

"Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."—James i. 25.

SOME one said of Daniel Webster's oration at Bunker Hill that "every word weighed a ton." There are a few great words in human speech, a few supremely great words, spacious and immeasurable. Liberty is one of them. It appears early in the records of the race, and is responsible for many a momentous movement in history, and many an institution of government and society.

Back of all tribal, provincial and national government is the desire for Liberty. Back of all social and political movements which have swayed masses of men has been the purpose to secure or to defend human rights. The first of human rights is liberty. Our American forefathers in their immortal Declaration name life first, and after that liberty

and the pursuit of happiness; but life itself has no value without liberty. Multitudes of men have counted not their lives dear that they might win liberty for their children and their children's children. Nathan Hale, noble young martyr of the American Revolution, spoke for innumerable numbers of our race and of other races when he said, "I regret only that I have but one life to give for my country." It is not to be denied that many have fought ignorantly, blindly, fought for ideas which were obnoxious to liberty, believing that they were fighting for liberty. This argues nothing against the worth of liberty. It simply shows how fallible is our judgment, how partial is our knowledge, how strong is our prejudice, and how false may be our education. The fact remains that there is no other idea to which we cling so passionately and so tenaciously as to liberty.

But there is another great word in our language, another word of vast importance, and that is Law. It is almost as ancient and altogether as honourable a word as Liberty. The very first human beings that appeared upon the planet must have discovered, early

in their history, even if it had not been revealed to them, that there is no liberty without law; that liberty and law cannot be separated; that liberty must be guided and guarded by law, and that law must be sweetened by liberty.

If there were only one man on earth there would not be so much need for law; there would be no social law, no civil law. There must still be natural law and spiritual law, but all other law would be useless, for the necessity for social and civil law arises out of our relationships. In order to have deep respect for law, one must consider his relationships, his relation to God, to other men, to the state, and to society. If he is tempted to overestimate the value of his own liberty, he must remember that other men are entitled to their liberty, and that his rights cease when they collide with the rights of others. So it is law which safeguards liberty. If law ever limits liberty, it is at the point where liberty, unlimited, ceases to be liberty, and becomes lawless license. Lawless liberty means anarchy, havoc, ruin, death.

So the phrase, "The law of liberty," is not a contradiction. Liberty has its laws, as cer-

tainly as property has its laws, or inheritance, —as life itself is bounded on every side by law.

James, in this verse, employs a phrase which is not applicable to any body of law known in human jurisprudence. He speaks of a perfect law. Where shall such a law be found? Not in the Code of Solon or Lycurgus; not in the Roman Law or the Code Napoleon; not in the English Common Law, nor in our Federal Constitution; not in the statutes of our state, or of our city. The history of legislation is a history of compromise and repeal. The Court of Appeals in New York was formerly called the Court for the Correction of Errors.

There is but one law of which it may be said it is perfect, and that is contained in the Holy Scriptures. It is not the Mosaic Law, though that was the best possible code for the age in which it was given. The Levitical Law was neither universal in its application nor permanent in its operation. It was imperfect, incomplete. Christ came to complete it. He said, "I am come to fulfill the Law." An Apostle says, "The law was our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ." A schoolmaster is helpful for a time, but we do not

take our schoolmasters with us through life. We leave our text-books behind us when we graduate. The laws of the schoolroom no longer bind us when we become men and women, but they are of value to us in so far as they have helped us to acquire power to meet and master the problems of life.

The perfect law of liberty, and the only perfect law, is that of Christ. Briefly stated, it is the Law of Love. This is His form of it: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the royal law, incomparable and divine.

What is it to look into a law? Vastly more than appears at first thought. It is one thing to look at an object, and quite another thing to look into it. The one is done by a mere glance, a single reading; the other is the result of a steadfast gaze, a meditation, a thorough and persistent study.

The Apostle's word for "looketh" means to stoop down and look intently, to search as the woman in the parable searched for her lost coin, to gaze as the disciples gazed into the empty sepulchre, to concentrate the vision as gold-seekers do when they bend above a brook to catch the glitter of yellow sand.

Beautiful suggestion of prayer is in this word, for they bend low to gaze into the meaning of the spiritual world who bow the knee and bend the head in prayer.

The difference between the forgetful hearer of the law and the careful looker into the law is the difference between one who stands outside a palace on a winter night, shivering in the street, content with the light that shines through the windows, and one who enters the palace, greets the host, and is greeted as a guest, to whom the light, the warmth, the music are all his own.

How many kinds of hearers there are! There is the casual hearer, who drops in merely to see what is going on; there is the preoccupied hearer whose thoughts are far away and fixed on other things; there is the prejudiced hearer whose mind is already made up; and there are the sleepy hearer, the indifferent hearer, the stupid hearer, the shallow hearer, and the hardened hearer who hears the truth as a thrice-told tale and turns to his feast again.

The "continual doer" is a very different kind of a hearer. He gives himself to worship on Sunday as seriously as to business

on Monday. He is not preoccupied. He is not prejudiced. He is willing to accept truth from any man's lips. He is not indifferent, knowing that more than life depends upon "whether these things be true." When he hears the truth, he inwardly accepts it and asks himself, "What difference shall this truth make in my life?" He begins to think differently at some point of contact with the world, and so the truth is translated into experience. His attitude is one of eager expectation,—"I will hear what God, the Lord, will speak."

This man, the continual doer, shall be "blessed in his deed." Rather, he shall be "blessed in his doing." The very doing of the truth blesses him. He knows the sweetness of harmony with law. He has the peerless pleasure of a contented mind. Peace whispers to his soul, "All shall be well with thee," and night and day there rings through the chamber of his memory such a song as this:

"So long Thy power hath blessed me,
Sure it still will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent,
Till the night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since and lost a while."

It is interesting to note that the Emphatic Version gives this reading of the text: "He that hath obtained a nearer view into the perfect law of liberty, and takes up his abode in it, becoming not a forgetful hearer, but a work-doer, shall be happy in his doing." Happiness is not the end of life, by any means. Yet, in the estimation of most of us, the pursuit of happiness is one of our inalienable human rights, second only to liberty.

Rightly defined, happiness is well worth seeking. Life is short. The earth is not a prison house. God's sunshine beckons us to joy. Burdened as we all are, no one of us need be like a galley slave scourged to his dungeon. William Morris was right when he spoke of the "curse of joyless labour." George Eliot was inspired by highest truth when she put upon the lips of the old Italian violin-maker, "If I slack my hand, I rob God; God could not do His work without me." The looker into the perfect law of liberty, the unforgetful hearer, the doer of the work of God, will never know the bitterness of joyless labour. He knows his work is constructive and hence indestructible. No man's labour is ever in vain, if it

be in the Lord. Moreover, he knows his work is benevolent. That is to say, it is genuine. And however it may lack variety, it need never grow irksome because of its monotony.

> "The common round, the trivial task,
> Will furnish all we ought to ask,—
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To lead us daily nearer God."

The day of wireless speech has dawned. The other day a human voice leaped across a space of more than four thousand miles. Yet none of those between the speaker and the hearer heard the message that trembled in the air. Instrument must be in tune with instrument, and atmospheric conditions must be favourable. The Bible is full of voices, God's voices, but only those who listen hear. Life is full of voices, God's voices, but only those who are in tune with the Infinite catch the sound. This is our task to-day,—to hear; and henceforth, "to do, to be, to learn to do without, and to depart." Whether we hear and do God's word, or whether it falls upon dull ears and dormant spirits is a matter of life and death, of bliss and blight.

Multitudinous voices of earth speak to the beast in us. God speaks to the best. The beast is contented with the sty. The best within us yearns upward to the sky.

Balzac in "Seraphitus" raises a most interesting inquiry. He says, "Why is it that we are appalled when we stand on the brink of a precipice and look down, and have no fear at all when we look up even into infinite space?" You may say, because we may fall down but are in no danger of falling up! That is not the reason. We belong up there. There is our home. There we are going in a little while. The best within us yearns upwards.

A modern poet gives us a startling phrase. He speaks of "a leaning voice." That is, a voice which by its tone, its accent, its tenderness, says, "Come." God's Word leans towards us. God's Spirit bends above us—broods over us. May our ears be open to His message this, and every day!

X

Saving Others and Saving One's Self

"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."
—Matthew xxvii. 42.

MANY were the unconscious prophecies pointing to Christ. Many were the unintentional tributes to His goodness and His greatness. The centurion who exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God," the procurator who declared, "I find no fault in Him," and the Roman woman who spoke of Him as "that just Person," all paid undesigned tribute to the extraordinary character of Jesus. The first half of this text is such a tribute. They who spoke it did so in mockery, but without intending to do so, they spoke the absolute truth. The second half of the text is not true. It is one of the falsehoods of the Bible. We do not discredit the Book when we say that it contains falsehoods. In the Book of Job we read, "All that a man hath will he give

in exchange for his life." It is not so. Multitudes of people hold spiritual and moral possessions of far greater value than their lives. It was the devil who said that, and he has been a liar from the beginning.

Even devils do sometimes tell the truth, by accident. These evil-minded men did when, at the foot of the Cross, they railed at Jesus and mocked Him saying, "He saved others." They told the truth when they wrote above the Cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." They were true to the spirit of Him they crucified when they wrote it in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, prophetic of the kingship of Jesus over the triple empire of religion, art and law. So, considered as a whole, half of the text is true, and half is false.

How true it was—and is—that Jesus saved others! His relation to all who came within the range of His ministry is comprehensively set forth in these words,—He saved them. He saved Matthew and Zacchæus from a soul-withering occupation. He saved Peter from selfish ambition and inconstancy. He saved Philip from materialism,—Philip, the man who said, "I want to see the Father." He saved Thomas from his doubts. He

saved Nicodemus from idle speculation as to the basis of the spiritual life. He saved Martha and Mary from needless grief,—from faithless grief. He saved Lazarus, the widow's son of Nain, and the little daughter of Jairus from the power of death. He saved Mary Magdalene from the domination of evil spirits. Besides these there were many He saved from lifelong darkness, and lifelong silence, and hopeless lameness, and incurable leprosy. They were right who said, "He saved others."

The wonderful thing is that, after His crucifixion and His subsequent disappearance from earth, that work went right on. Somehow, He saved His disciples from a sense of defeat in His death. Only for a night did their weeping endure. Joy came in the morning. He saved every one of them from believing that death ends all. Years go by and men and women rise up on every hand to testify how they have been saved: Paul and Polycarp, John and Justin Martyr, Basil and Clement of Alexandria. Before the world is well aware of it there is a new word in the lexicon, there is a new song in the air. That word is salvation, and that song exalts Jesus

as the Saviour of all who put their trust in Him.

There is no doubt this is the great word of religion. Read the New Testament; read Christian hymnology. They are both full of it. It has not always been so. The Psalms were the hymns of the old faith. Is salvation there? Oh, yes, but often it is mere safety, physical safety, circumstantial safety. But in the New Testament, and in modern religious literature, salvation is no narrow term. It includes all that Jesus Christ does for us,—all He ever has done or ever can do, for individuals, for society, and for the world.

If I speak of the saviour of Poland, you think of John Sobieski. If I speak of the saviour of Sweden you think of Gustavus Adolphus. If I speak of the saviour of the Union, you think of Abraham Lincoln. But if I speak of your Saviour, of the Saviour of the world, instantly you think of Jesus. So it seems as though sneering, scornful, jealous, bloody men gave Jesus His true title,—Saviour.

I have already intimated in speaking of the various persons who came into particular relationship with Jesus, how salvation meant

one thing to one person, and another thing to another person. Yet it was the same Power dealing with them; and in the end. the result was identical,—spiritual rest and spiritual power. This same fact holds good throughout history. There is an old legend that the manna that fell in the Wilderness tasted to each person who partook of it exactly like the food which at that time he most craved. It is a parable of the grace of God which brings to each of us the kind of salvation he most needs.

Is there more than one kind of salvation? No, but it is like this: Whence comes the beautiful hue of the violet which soon will colour the woodlands? Whence come the delicate saffron of the daffodil, the deep red of the crimson rambler, the rich purple of the pansy? All come from the same sun. But each plant absorbs those qualities of the sunlight which the unreasoning nature of its own organism lays hold on. The same sun, but various colours. It is so in the gardens of our souls. One life lays hold on this, and another on that element in the wonderful light that streams upon us from the source of spiritual life and light.

Salvation meant the same thing exactly to Martha and to Mary, but to one it came by ministering to Jesus, and to the other it came by adoring Him. A father has two daughters. When he comes home at night, weary with the labour of the day, Agnes runs to him, embraces and kisses him, and he is no sooner seated than she is sitting on his knees, while Marion unties his shoes, and gets his slippers, and performs a dozen pleasant and restful little services which add to his comfort. What a dear father he is! And what dear daughters he has! Who shall say which of the two loves him the better? And no one can say which of the two he loves the better. But his love means one thing to Agnes, and another to Mary. It was so with the two of Bethany. Jesus spoke to Martha —what He was spoke to her, and she heard but one word, Duty. Jesus spoke to Mary, and she heard only,—Worship, Adoration.

Jesus spoke to the rich young ruler. And the young man heard the great rugged word, Surrender, and it terrified him. But to Nicodemus Jesus spoke, and all He seemed to say was, " Cease to strive ; cease to perform ; turn from dead formalism, and enter into the lib-

erty of a living spirit." The end was the same, but the process differed according to the history and temperament of the inquirer.

What do you suppose salvation meant to the Samaritan woman? To live a well ordered and lawful life. What to the man at Bethesda's pool? To cease from sin, and from despair. What did it mean to the leper? To show himself to the priest and go back to his family a restored man. Need we pursue this thought? Jesus saves by no inflexibly fixed process or act of form or reform. What each needed to live his natural life to the fullest possible degree was what Jesus furnished; in one case cleansing, in another honesty, in another courage, and in another simple devotion to simple unattractive duty. It is so today. Jesus saves. I believe it with all my soul. If I did not, I should cease my ministry before this sermon is ended. But it takes one element of spiritual power to save some of us, and another element to save others.

There are those who need to be saved from great ambition, and there are those who need to be saved from mean ambition. There are those who need to be saved from secret sin, and those who need to be saved

from presumptuous sin. Some of us must be delivered from falsehood and some from covetousness. Self-pride is the curse of some hearts and self-reproach the curse of others. One needs to be delivered from fear, and another from doubt. Unreasoning optimism is the fatal fault of one and unreasoning pessimism of another. But it is the one omnipotent Christ who can save us all. And the one thing we all need to be saved from is ourselves.

True, sublimely and incontestably true is it, "He saved others." False, and can we not see how false it was, "Himself He cannot save"? Cannot? Who was He? From the beginning He was with God, and He was God. All things were made by Him, land and sea, sun and stars. He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Master of Nature's hidden and revealed forces, King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, yet "He cannot save Himself!" Saints and angels call Him Saviour, yet "He cannot save Himself!" Nay, rather write it, "Himself He would not save." The divine passion was upon Him, and He must not save Himself.

What if Jesus had saved Himself by refusal to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows? What if He had saved Himself by force or cunning? Perish the thought, for then must we save ourselves, or perish. The captain of the sinking ship at midnight on the North Sea could have saved himself, but he would not until the last boat had been lowered, and then there was no room for him. The martyr could have saved himself by renouncing one of his absurd enthusiasms, but if he had, human history had been the poorer. There are ways of saving ourselves, but no man whose safety is his chief thought is worth saving. The race has risen in the scale of honour by vicarious suffering. There is a law of atonement running all through the noblest literature and the noblest life. Shall we whose civil and religious rights, yea, we, whose very material comforts have been secured to us by the outpouring of others' blood, turn from the Christian doctrine of atonement, and from the Cross on which He died, "the Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God"?

Professor Huxley wrote to John Morley in the early nineties of the last century: "The

thought comes to me sometimes and stuns me, I shall probably know as little of what the world is doing in 1900 as I did in 1800. The thought oppresses me. Are you ever troubled so?" Ah, the passing years will push us off these shores. Other generations shall come to take our places. Shall the passing years carry men away from Christ and His salvation? Never. To the uttermost of space and need and time, He is the Power of God unto salvation.

"God may have other words for other worlds,
But for this world the word of God is Christ."

The great thing, the immediate thing for us to know is that here and now Jesus has saved and is saving us from every act and from every view of life which is unworthy our character as the children of God. Now, while it is yet day; now, while the blood is yet red in our pulses; now, while there is a good fight to fight, and a good confession to be witnessed; here, where there is so much to be done in His Name; here, where righteous causes are calling for recruits; here, where there is a place in the church for every one of us among God's people and

Christ's disciples,—now and here, it is possible for us to know better than we know any earthly fact, that Jesus Christ saves us, even though He would not save Himself,—saves us because He would not save Himself. Now and here it is for us to follow in His train and strive before the evening comes, to be, each of us in his sphere, a saviour of others ; a helper and a servant and a soldier of human welfare and the common good.

XI

The Wonderful Book

(Address on presenting Bibles to members of the graduating class of the West Point Military Academy, April 7, 1915.)

IT may be doubted whether there is any other great book except the Bible with which many otherwise well-educated people are so imperfectly acquainted. It is needless now to enter into an explanation of the fact, but fact it is, that multitudes of college students and college graduates are incredibly ignorant of the Scriptures as literature. President Thwing, of Western Reserve University, in a recent magazine article has given some astonishing instances of popular ignorance concerning the Bible among college students. Some of these would be amusing if they were not shameful. For example, one student, in answer to the question, "What relation is there between the Old Testament and the New?" replied, "I think of none except that the Apostle Peter cut off

the right ear of a servant of the prophet Malachi." This answer was quite as creditable as that of a little coloured boy in a Southern Sunday-school, who said, in reply to the question, "What is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament?" "De Old Testament was writ befo' de wah, and de New Testament was writ aftah de wah." A professor of English Literature in one of our leading universities relates that more than half of the members of a certain class whom he examined as to their knowledge of the Bible were unable to explain such references as these, "the smitten rock," "the ark of the covenant," "Jephtha's vow," and "the Feast of the Tabernacles." Three-fourths of the members of the class were unable to give a single fact about such names as Melchizedek, Naaman and Nathanael. Several confused Saul of Israel with Saul of Tarsus, and not a few thought John the Baptist and John the Apostle were the same.

Knowing how largely your Bible study classes have been attended, I have no fear that any of you are guilty of such ignorance of the Bible. And yet, not from the view-

point of the professional teacher of religion, much less from the view-point of an assumed superiority of knowledge, but from the view-point of a fellow-student of literature and a fellow-seeker after the truth, I plead for a more thorough knowledge of these Holy Scriptures. The venerable Schleiermacher once held up a copy of the Greek New Testament before a class in the University of Berlin and said, "Young gentlemen, this little volume contains more that is of vital interest to humanity than all the other writings of antiquity put together." (Yet Schleiermacher knew his Plato as well as he knew his New Testament.)

Practically all I have to say to you to-day is in vindication of just such a view of the Bible as Schleiermacher expressed. Upon what facts does the value of the Bible rest,—its practical value to the modern man?

First, it is a book of laws. We cannot have a kingdom without laws, whether it be an organic or inorganic kingdom. The Bible is chiefly related to the Kingdom of God. The laws of the Kingdom of God are nowhere else so fully and so clearly stated as here. The first of these laws, so far as our

relation to the Kingdom of God is concerned, is the law of loyalty. Dr. Josiah Royce calls Christianity "a religion of loyalty." We cannot take our first step towards the Kingdom of God without obedience to this law of loyalty. Loyalty to what? Loyalty to the truth; that is, to the truth relatively, not absolutely; the truth as we see it. Every other law in obedience to which the soul grows in the qualities of kinship to God is in this Book laid down and enforced by admonition and example.

Laws, so far as they relate to human society, exist for the purpose of defining and securing human rights. So the Bible is also a book of rights. Democracy flourishes in the path of this book. Benjamin Kidd, in his "Social Evolution," reminds us that "from the view-point of science there are no superior races; the white race is what it is because there has been wrought into it a body of truths, ideas, sentiments, immediately due to Christianity, which have made it strong, productive, progressive." This is in entire accord with a recent pronouncement of Count Okuma, the Japanese Premier, who said at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of

the beginning of Christian missions in Japan, "Modern civilization has its rise in the teachings of the Sage of Judea, in whom alone is found the dynamic of moral progress."

But every human right has its corresponding duty. No man is entitled to claim his rights who does not discharge his corresponding obligations. So the Bible is a book of duties.

It is a book of visions. The ideal, in the abstract, has little power of appeal. But let that ideal be embodied in human conduct, and it evokes our utmost admiration and, given us an adequate motive, it commands our earnest endeavour. The vision of personal and social righteousness as presented in the Holy Scriptures rises before us like a vision of perfect beauty beckoning us to follow until we make it ours.

The Bible is a book of warnings. The green light of caution, the red light of danger and the white light of safety flash out of these pages so plainly that he who runs may read. A dozen years ago one of the most brilliant of English essayists, dramatists and poets died in exile and was buried in a

foreign land by the hands of charity. One of his last literary works was a poem, which for tragic depth of feeling is almost unexcelled in modern letters. In it he says:

> "They never win who play with sin
> In the secret house of shame."

And again in describing a felon's death he wrote:

> "For he who lives more lives than one,
> More deaths than one must die."

These words are in entire accord with the admonitions of this Book.

The Bible is a book of battles. It is preeminently the soldier's book. It is full of militant figures. It presents life under the aspect of a battle. For this reason it has appealed to intellects like that of Stonewall Jackson, who in the midst of the Civil War said, "I pray that this war may soon cease, that we may return to our divine task of winning men to Christ;" to characters like that of General "Chinese" Gordon, a knight without reproach, who upon leaving London for his last mission on earth, in the Sudan, wrote a friend, "I would rather have the prayers of the little company of people gath-

ered in your house to-night than be emperor of the earth;" to souls like that of David Livingstone, who died upon his knees in the shelter of a little hut in Africa. David Livingstone at the age of nine won a copy of the New Testament as a prize for having repeated the entire 119th Psalm on two successive evenings with only five verbal errors. The Bible was his unfailing guide through life.

It is a book of peace. Gilbert K. Chesterton says of Robert Louis Stevenson, "If he had but two hours out of five free from pain, he counted the two hours and took no note of the three." That was R. L. S.'s law of life,—"I mark only the hours that are serene." The secret of the achievement of such a conception of life is very plain to him who reads the "Prayers at Vailima." They are the psalms of a serene spirit.

Petrarch speaks of the five great enemies of peace as avarice, ambition, envy, anger and pride. This Book is the enemy of these enemies of peace.

The Bible is a book of right perspectives. It gives pleasure and duty each its proper place in the scheme of life. It puts first

things first. It defines the right order of conduct and reveals the right value of the various elements that enter into human existence. There is a great difference between a landscape by a Japanese artist and one by a Western artist. A Japanese picture totally lacks perspective. Some people's view of life is exactly like that. They are not aware of the "illusion of the near." The present fills their horizon to the utter exclusion of the future. The Bible leads us to look at life with a certain sense of detachment. We must sometimes leave the world to get strength to live in it. We must view temporal things under the aspect of eternity. This Book helps us to do that.

The Bible is a book of sentiment. Some so-called practical people disparage sentiment, but high souls live in it. Wordsworth says, "We live by admiration, hope and love." These are mere sentiments. It is sentiment which gives value to the Victoria Cross. The mere metal in a Victoria Cross is worth just six cents, but the Victoria Cross is worth the price of a king's ransom. Great souls are not indifferent to the value of sentiment. Charles Lamb wrote to Coleridge

from his desk in the East India House, "I am all alone here. There are plenty of clerks in the office, but nobody cares for poetry, nobody reads the New Testament. So I can only converse with you by letter."

The Bible is a book of truth. It does not at once begin to dawn upon the reader of the Holy Scriptures that its end is to reveal to us the truth. We familiarize our minds with its content, and some day there comes a moment of revelation that the purpose of it all is to make us free in the knowledge of the truth,—the truth with reference to God and ourselves. Most of us are very slow to apprehend moral truth. Perhaps it is in the nature of truth itself to produce its effect upon us by evolution rather than by revolution. Sir Michael Faraday discovered that gold, heavy as it is, is very slow to sink. A solution of gold in a shallow vessel, in his experiment, took months before it perfectly precipitated.

The Bible is a book of life. A great artist painted a picture under the dome of an Italian church. But in order to see it, even imperfectly, the beholder must stand beneath the dome and look straight up, a strained

and difficult position. The authorities of the church solved the problem by removing the floor under the dome and putting a mirror there with a railing around it. Now the visitor can look down and study every line of the masterpiece. Look into the mirror of this Book for life in every phase, life wrestling with temptation, life triumphant over sorrow, life overcoming death.

It is a book of great horizons. A generation ago the Marquis of Salisbury said to a "little Englander" who failed to perceive the greatness of the dream of world-wide empire, "You must study bigger maps." The Bible bids us study the biggest maps. Under its tuition the little walls which seem to hem us in are far removed, the low ceiling is vastly lifted, and the loyal soul shares the possession of the universe with God.

There is something in this Book for every age. It has its message for infancy when we know not anything but love; for childhood with its generous trust; for youth with its unquenched enthusiasms; for age with its burdens; for advancing years, life's mellow October, with their whitening frosts that silver the hair and soften the heart.

Because the Bible is all this, it is a character-forming book, and Arnold, master of Rugby, never said a wiser thing than this, "The one thing in life worthy our absorbing attention is character." A man cannot read this Book with mental sincerity and not be profoundly affected by it indirectly. And he cannot read it with moral sincerity without being profoundly affected by it directly. A young man who had the gift of going straight at the heart of a matter wrote to his father from college, "I have found that I had to give up my vices or give up my Bible."

The Bible is a book of portraits. There is no such gallery of biography in any other volume,—kings and warriors, "chieftains and bards and keepers of their sheep." But the supreme portrait of the Book is in the New Testament. It is a Face out of which look steady, piercing eyes, which follow us as with the gaze of a living soul. Jesus Christ, faintly outlined in the Old Testament, is fully portrayed in the New. Soon or late, every reader of this Book stands before that Face. At first the student seems to hear the query, "What think ye of Christ?" Later the question takes another form, and resolves it-

self into this, "What does Christ think of me?"

I do not state it too strongly when I say, finally, that this Book, being Christ's Book, is the book of salvation. "Power unto salvation" is Paul's phrase. Matthew Arnold divides all literature into books of light and books of power. The Bible is both. It is superlatively the book of power. The supreme dynamic is not only moral but personal. The Man of this portrait demands, "What then will ye do with Me?"

Some one asked the old black body-servant of Andrew Jackson, after the General's decease, "Do you think your master went to heaven?" and he replied, "I don't know, but I specs he did if he wanted to." God never coerces any human soul. This Book is a book of freedom as well as of power. There are no slaves in God's household. He makes His servants sons. May His Spirit be upon you all for good.

XII

To Him That Hath

"Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."

—Luke viii. 18.

THERE are two kinds of sayings in the Bible over which many stumble. They are dark sayings and hard sayings. Dark sayings are such as are difficult to understand. Hard sayings are such as seem, upon the face of them, cruel and unjust. The text is a hard saying. It is apparently cruel.

And yet the cruelty of this saying is like the cruelty of Nature,—in the end it is benevolent. Nature is at once the most tyrannical and the most benevolent mistress. Obey her laws and she smiles. Disobey her laws, and her face is steadfastly set against us.

Upon the surface these words seem arbitrary. But when we look deeper into them

we shall find that they are not so. They would be true even if the Bible had never contained them. They are true because of natural law, and natural law is benevolent, considered as to its end.

Consider for a moment another hard saying: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Is this cruel? Is it arbitrary? Nay. It is inevitable. Righteousness is life, and so the man who deliberately chooses unrighteousness is committing suicide. (It is very significant that in the Revised Version of the New Testament in almost every instance in which the Authorized Version uses the word soul, the word life is substituted, so that we read, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?")

"To him that hath shall be given." Is this according to natural law? It would seem so. It is according to a law resembling gravitation. Any two masses of matter in the universe attract each other. The larger the mass, the stronger the attraction. See the children rolling up snowballs in the soft snow. The larger the ball, the more snow it accumulates as it is pushed along. To him that hath shall be given.

The law operates in the realm of finance. It is much easier for a man of some capital to make headway than for one who has little or nothing. It is a common saying that after the first thousand dollars or the first ten thousand dollars have been accumulated, the growth of one's fortune is tolerably secure. Certainly the man of large capital has many chances for profitable investment which do not occur to the man of small capital.

It is so in the world of scholarship. Here are two students, one with a keen mind and a retentive memory, the other with slower faculties. How much easier it is for the one to learn! Knowledge comes to him. The other has to dig for it. The compensatory fact that the slow student may be more thorough and more accurate than the other does not disprove the principle that the larger the intellectual capital, the larger and the easier are the achievements.

It is exactly so of spiritual gifts. Jesus was speaking of spiritual things. He had little or nothing to say to men about commerce or scholarship. He left that to those who should thereafter specialize in such things. He was a specialist in the things of the spirit.

And here He enunciates a spiritual principle which is clearly demonstrable. The man of prayer at length finds prayer an easy exercise. He who has made truth the law of his life speaks the truth without effort when temptation comes. He whose life has been devoted to duty does his duty in a crisis without a struggle. Duty has become second nature to him. On the other hand, the man of prayerless habits accumulates doubts and fears. The man who has sacrificed truth to mere convenience finds it difficult to tell the truth or even to recognize the truth when he sees it, which confirms Plato's saying that "the perception of truth is a moral act." He who has dodged duty at every possible opportunity does not recognize it when he meets it face to face. The man of spiritual gifts grows richer and richer. The man of spiritual poverty, the man who is spiritually insolvent, grows poorer and poorer.

See how it works in the realm of conduct. He who has learned the art of self-control grows in capacity for self-control. The uncontrolled man grows more uncontrollable. Nothing is more pitiful than the sight of one who has been so long in the habit of losing

his self-control and letting his tongue run away with him that, on the slightest provocation, his torpedo-like temper explodes, and gets him into endless trouble. It is so of self-denial. He who has practiced self-sacrifice daily finds joy in it. The self-indulgent soul finds it difficult and at length impossible to exercise self-sacrifice. His moral muscles have grown stiff. They will not bend. Pampered nature will not be denied.

All these things are proofs of the truth of the text. Now what natural law explains it? It is the law of potential energy. Every thought and every act of ours is followed by a physical change in us. If we could examine the brain of a living person and if our senses were sufficiently acute and our knowledge of brain functions were sufficiently comprehensive, we should see that every voluntary act of ours is followed by chemical changes in the blood and these record themselves in the fibers and tissues of the brain. He who schools himself to doing difficult things thereby stores up within his brain a certain amount of potential energy, which makes the doing of such things less difficult each time they are repeated. Upon this law

of potential energy depend all such exercises as playing upon musical instruments, gymnastic feats and the like. Here is a master musician, or let us say, a magician, or an athlete, performing almost incredible feats, involving rapid motion, or skill, or strength. We know that it has not always been easy for him to do these things. They were hard when he began his practice. But each time he performed them he had a little larger capital upon which to draw for the next attempt.

A great violinist says, "If I neglect my practice a day I know the difference; if I neglect it two or three days, my friends know the difference; if I neglect it a week the public knows it."

Thomas K. Beecher was one of the most brilliant members of that famous family. He once told me of a remarkable experiment of his own. Some years before, his eyes began to fail him. So he decided to use only one of his eyes in reading, closing the other. This he did in the belief that presently, when the much-used eye failed, the little-used eye would be of service. But it was the eye he saved that was the first to fail. Does not this remind us of those other words of our

Saviour, "He that would gain his life must lose it"? This also is a hard saying, quite as hard as the saying of the text, very paradoxical indeed, and yet very true. The best way to gain some things is to be willing to lose them.

Call over the names of the martyrs of the ages. Who are they? Men and women who have lost their lives. And yet look again into history's pages and you shall find that the most of these live more truly in the life of the world than their more prudent brothers and sisters who hid themselves in times of danger and saved their lives. Saved their lives? Their lives were not worth saving. And so Humanity did not save them.

Did Jesus lose His life? If He did, He has found it again in a million million other lives. Did Stephen lose his life? He found it again in Paul. Did Paul lose his life? He found it again in Timothy. Did Telemachus lose his life? (He was that monk who threw himself into the arena to protest against the massacre of gladiators who fought each other for the delectation of the Roman Emperor and the Vestal Virgins and the fickle populace. He lost his life, but in the act of

losing it he gave the death blow to gladiatorialism and his act secured the lives of multitudes.) Did any martyr ever lose anything? Only as we lose our money when we put it into a savings bank. We get it back with interest. The best way to gain power is to expend it. That which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die.

"It is a faithful saying that if we be dead with Christ we shall also live with Him." These words do not refer to literal death, but to that moral state which Jesus exemplified in which it was evident that in Him pride and avarice and self-will and sloth and envy were dead. As these things died in Him, His spirit lived, and in that spirit's life the dead world has hope of life that shall endless be.

There was an old sculptor who as he worked upon the stone, with mallet and chisel, was wont to say, "As the marble wastes the statue grows." This is a parable of life. Power by renunciation. Indeed there is no true moral power without it. They live most deeply in the world's life who have renounced their own. They rise the highest who are most willing to stoop to lift others up. True wealth grows as it expends

itself in the enrichment of the common life of the race. The whole lesson of the text is contained in those closing lines of one of our modern poets' masterpieces:

"Battling with fate, with men, and with myself,
Up the steep summit of my life's forenoon,
Three things I learned, three things of precious worth
To guide and help me down the western slope:
I have learned how to pray, and toil, and save;
To pray for courage to receive what comes,
Knowing what comes to be divinely sent;
To toil for universal good, since thus, and only thus,
Can good come unto me; to save
By giving whatso'er I have to those who have not,—
This, and this alone is gain."

XIII

The Captaincy of Jesus

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

—Hebrews ii. 10.

IT is difficult to treat this verse in its entirety and treat any portion of it sufficiently. There is so much of it.

It contains a comprehensive and illuminating statement of the sovereignty of God. Who is He? What is He? What is His relation to the world and the universe? This is the answer: "For whom are all things and through whom are all things." Here are affirmed sovereign creatorship, sovereign ownership, sovereign presence in the universe. Henceforth let no man charge the writers of this Book, either in the Old or New Testament, with cherishing a small notion of God. Not Plato nor Epictetus had so perfect an idea of the Supreme Power as had this unknown

writer of the first century of our era. And we know where he got it; we know whence he derived his idea of God,—from One who, as he believed, came from God with authority to speak for God.

Then there is here a great light thrown on the most important of all questions,—What is God's will concerning us? It is plain. He purposes "to bring many children unto glory." They asked Jesus, "Are there many that be saved?" Here is the solution of that problem. God will not be satisfied with a few; He must bring many sons unto glory.

Here also light is thrown upon the end of our faith. To what will God bring us? What lies beyond the corner, within the veil? Glory. What glory? Certainly not the glory of ultimate extinction. That is the Buddhist's best hope. Certainly not the glory of a Mohammedan paradise. That would be no glory for a spiritual being. It is to the glory of childship we are called. "We shall be like Him." Is this not enough? Is there anything under the heavens or above them better than that?

But all this is merely introductory to what I am anxious you should see in these words

to-day. There is here a strange title attributed to Jesus. He is called a Captain. The word is used often in the Septuagint and in the classics, but I think not elsewhere in the New Testament except in the book of "The Acts of the Apostles," where Peter, before the Council in Jerusalem, speaks of Jesus as "exalted to be a prince and Saviour." The Revised Version, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, translates the word "Author,"—"the Author of our salvation," but in so doing, it would seem, fails to make forceful the idea that Jesus is not only the author of our salvation, but our still-present leader. He brings us unto glory, but He leads the way. "He goeth before us." That is what a captain is for, to lead the way, to say "come," not "go." Jesus Himself said, "I am the Way," making clear that all we have to do is to keep close to Him.

So the text sees Jesus as John does in Revelation, leading the hosts of heaven, upon His vesture the name, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

There is no doubt Jesus was a great leader. By all possible tests, by the highest of all standards, He was the world's greatest leader.

Moses and David and Isaiah were leaders, but they merely pointed the way to Him. He led His disciples to moral victory, to heights of heroism, to a spiritual exaltation that has made them, stupid as they were, the teachers of the world. Consider His difficulties: the unfavourable age, the unpromising human material, the array of opposing forces, and then give Him the glory due Him as a matchless leader. Remember the best test of a leader's power is the ability to induce men to attempt the impossible. Then see Jesus, putting hope into hopeless souls, bidding a man with a withered arm stretch forth his hand, and lo! he essays to do it, and succeeds! What Napoleon did on the lowest plane, when he said, "The Alps? There shall be no Alps!" Jesus did on the highest when He said, "The world? We shall live above the world." Is it the test of a man's genius for leadership to put his own spirit into his followers? Jesus did that. Stephen died as died our Lord, praying for his murderers. So died Paul. The soul of Jesus becomes the heritage of His people.

But the text is more concerned with the explanation of Jesus' leadership than with its

illustration or vindication. It gives us the practical philosophy of it. It accounts for Jesus' captaincy. "He was made perfect through sufferings." That is to say, through discipline. Power came to Him through self-denial. What He surrendered in one sphere passed over to His credit in another. That is God's way to strength and beauty. It is nature's way. A great rose-bush may bear but one blossom, but it is a perfect blossom. Other blossoms started, but were destroyed, that the life of the whole bush might go into one red rose.

> "We rise by the things that are under our feet,
> By what we have mastered of good and gain,
> By the pride deposed and the passion slain
> And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet."

Think what we all learn by what we suffer. Or rather, what we may learn. Not all do. There are two ways for a swimmer in the sea to meet an oncoming wave. He may bend and break the force, or he may meet it defiantly and be broken. Fire that melts ore hardens clay. Have you not seen it so in life? The same great loss befalls two souls; one is subdued to tenderness, while

the other becomes morose and bitter. I have heard a woman say who had lost a child, "My heart is broken but not contrite." Henley in his great poem, the best modern expression of stoicism, says, "My head is bloody but unbowed." An unbowed head is proud, stubborn, rebellious. Poverty spurs some souls to high endeavour, and utterly disheartens others. Opposition inspires some and depresses others. One man stands up all the more erectly under heavy burdens that would crush another. Sorrow purifies some hearts and petrifies others. All these things Jesus knew, poverty, opposition, heavy burdens, sorrow; but they were a part of His discipline as a man and as a leader of men.

From such things Jesus learned obedience. It is an axiom that a man cannot command until he has learned to obey. The president of one of our greatest railroads came up from his place as a section hand. His men respect him all the more because he learned to obey. See Jesus' attitude towards the Father in the temple, at His baptism, in Gethsemane, on the Cross. There is the perfect Son to whom the Father's will is the

law of His life. Does He command? He first obeyed.

He learned sympathy. "We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Is the way hard? He knows how hard it is. Do my own kinsmen doubt me? His kinsmen doubted Him. Has a friend betrayed me? He had His Judas. Have I been maligned? They called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber. This is the secret of His sympathy. He was made perfect through sufferings. Henceforth let no man who is having a hard time say the heavens are deaf to his cry. It falls upon a fellow-sufferer's ears, and finds response within His heart. Travellers through a virgin forest blaze the path for others to follow. So, in our pilgrimage we find here and there the marks of One who passed this way before us but yesterday!

He learned courage. It may be some men are gifted by nature with a constitutional incapacity for fear. But, even so, it is not courage to know no fear. But to know fear, to feel its force, and yet to bear up and press on,—that is courage.

Women are naturally more fearful than

men, but nevertheless are generally braver. In emergencies, a woman may be depended upon to do the unselfish thing, the courageous thing, the self-forgetful thing. Jesus was like that,—always doing brave and noble things, always proving Himself courageous to the last degree. It required courage to send word to Herod, "Go tell that fox." It required courage to drive the hucksters out of the Temple. It required courage when He faced Pilate, and when the Roman Governor said, "Art thou then a king?" to reply, "Thou sayest." But courage is a habit of the mind. It grows by exercise. In the crises of His life, His courage failed Him not because daily He had cultivated the love of truth more than life.

Now we have found what He had learned by life's discipline,—obedience, sympathy, courage. With these qualities wrought into His soul, who was so fit to be the Captain of our salvation? Who so deserves our homage now? For He leads His people to obedience and sympathy and courage.

Would we be leaders under Him? These must be our warrant. These are the irreducible price of religious leadership. Leader-

ship without these is powerless to touch life. Say not however, "Go to, therefore, I will straightway be obedient and sympathetic and courageous." Say rather, "I will seek constant fellowship with Jesus Christ, that His life may flow into my life and I grow like Him day by day."

XIV

Where to Find God

"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! . . . Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him; but He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

—Job xxiii. 3, 8–10.

THOMAS CARLYLE was a lover of the Holy Scriptures. Something of the rugged majesty of his literary style is due to his familiarity with the writings of the Hebrew prophets. He was a lover of the Book of Job. He spoke thus of it: "A noble book! All men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem of man's destiny and God's way with him here in the earth. And all in such free, glowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, grand in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose of reconcilement. . . . Such

living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation, oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind; so soft and great, as the world with its seas and stars."

Truly, a great book it is, by whomsoever written,—a masterpiece of poesy, a masterpiece of philosophy, a masterpiece of theology, a masterpiece of devotion, touching in its pathos, soothing in its music, deep and satisfying in its truth.

It is the heart-history of one who lived a brave and beautiful life. Sorrow after sorrow came to him. Loss after loss befell him. Mystery after mystery mocked him. His friends forsook him. Death robbed him of his children. Tempests of pain beat down upon his uncovered head, and beat harder upon his naked heart, yet he clung with passionate persistence to his confidence in God.

In the verses of the text we see him seeking, but seeking all in vain, behind, and before, and around him, for some assurance of God; then seeking within his own heart, and finding there some intuition, some sense, of God, something which whispers, "God is,

and God is good," and so he rests the whole case there!

Now Job is not alone in his quest of God. Abraham, who may have been Job's contemporary, is traditionally represented as pursuing the same quest. He thought he had found God in the sacred river, and so he worshipped it. But the river overflowed its banks, and brought death to multitudes, and he turned his worship to the heavens. Sun, moon and stars he worshipped, until he perceived that the sun varies in his light-giving and life-imparting properties—that the sun can smite as well as smile, that the moon wanes and that the stars grow pale. Then he lifted his thoughts to the Maker of rivers and mountains, seas and suns, and so began the revelation of Jehovah to the Hebrew race.

And Isaiah was another like Job, a thousand years later. He, too, lived a strong and serene life, and he, too, came to the same conclusion about God—let us rather say, he came to the same understanding with God. With Isaiah, the work of faith was peace, and the effect of faith was quietness and assurance forever. And yet Isaiah, with his clearer apprehension of God, was so con-

scious of the limitations of his knowledge, that he cried, "Verily, Thou art a God who hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

Seven hundred years go by, and we find one of Jesus' disciples voicing the old desire for some perceptible evidence of God,— "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

It is the old, old, yet ever new, problem of the soul. They who taunted the Psalmist with the challenge, "Who will show us any good?" really meant, "Who will show us any good reason for belief in God?" The Athenian altar, dedicated "To the God Unknown," was a pitiful confession that with all their gods and goddesses, the Greeks were still where Job was when he exclaimed, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

Is it not tragic, is it not the very soul of tragedy, this perpetual interrogation, and this perpetual silence? Birds and beasts are not forever looking for something they never find. They are not dissatisfied with themselves and their environment. Are we less perfect than they?

Nay! It is because we are more perfect that we are forever seeking something beyond our grasp. The cry of a babe is not

as perfect or as pleasing as the song of a nightingale, but there is more promise in it! The unsatisfied longings of our souls are our richest heritage. They argue that we were made for something better than we have. If our eyes were content with beauty, our hearts with love, and our minds with truth, then were we perfect,—then there were nothing more to gain. Just because we are not content, just because the soul still pursues its quest, we know we are destined to greater things than can be seen or heard or thought. Such was Augustine's idea, which some one has put into verse:

> "In vain we seek for rest
> In all created good,—
> It leaves us still unblest,
> And makes us sigh for God.
> Surely at rest we ne'er can be
> Until our souls find rest in Thee!"

Amiel, that saintly and mystical Swiss professor at Geneva, whose intimate journal Mrs. Humphrey Ward has translated for us, says it in other words: "It is the Absolute I seek: nothing less than the Unconditioned, the Perfect, the Ultimate, can make me complete." How like is that to the writer of Ecclesiastes who declares that God has put

eternity into our hearts! Well, Amiel died unsatisfied, and his last recorded words were a quotation from some French poet, "Oh, my poor, tired heart."

Let us suppose that he had died satisfied, perfectly satisfied with himself, with the truth he had acquired and with the love he had experienced,—that would have been sad!

His friends wrote above the grave of one of England's greatest scholars,—the author of "The Short History of the English People," "He died learning." Browning puts it in his tense, terse style:

> "Our reach is greater than our grasp,
> Else what's heaven for?"

But the question comes, Is it not a grief, a source of constant mental irritation and moral perturbation, to be seeking what we cannot find? The Psalmist did not find it so who said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with His likeness." Nor the Apostle, who said, "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." Nor Job, who fell back upon this conviction, "He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." These were

not satisfied, but they were satisfied to remain unsatisfied until the hour of full revealment came.

And this is FAITH—content to continue the quest for God, to do His will, knowing full well that we shall behold Him when "His black slave, Death," disrobes us of our bodies, and ushers us through the gates that open inwardly to the Temple of All Truth.

Paul had this view of faith when he wrote, "We look not at the things which are seen." So had the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who defines faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." And so have we all for whom a modern psalmist confesses:

"I know not what awaits me,
God kindly veils my eyes,
And o'er each step of my onward way
He makes new scenes to rise,
And every joy He gives me
Brings a glad and new surprise.

"So on I go, not knowing,
I would not if I might,—
I'd rather walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light,
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone in the light."

Job could not find God behind him,—that is, in memory; nor before him, that is, in hope; nor in nature about him. Sorrow, deep sorrow, does this for us,—it blots out all the past and all the future, and spreads a black pall over nature itself. But when he looked within himself, he found an assurance, a conviction of God, and that, to use the term of a modern German philosopher, had all "the value of God" for him.

Where shall I find God? is the question of many a seeker. There are those here to-day who are saying to themselves—and who would say to others if they felt free to express their inmost thoughts—"If I were only sure of God, the way would all be plain—I could take the rest, as logically included in that." Then to such is this message:

We may be sure of God—just as sure as if an angel stood before us with wings "like lightning clad in snow"; just as sure as if, on looking up into the noonday sky, we were to see in words of fire across the arch of blue, "God is." Where shall we find Him? Where shall we look for Him? Within.

I do not mean the old teleological argument for God—the evidence of a Designer.

It is rather,—look within for an indubitable capacity for God. The old design argument is strong, whether we use as an illustration Paley's watch or John Fiske's orchid. "He that made the eye, shall He not see? And He that fashioned the ear, shall He not hear?" And the argument from the validity of instinct is still tenable. The bird's unreasoning impulse to migration is evidence of rice-swamps and fruit-fields under Southern skies.

"He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

But the argument from capacity is still stronger. Our desire for God is not "the desire of the moth for the star." The moth has no capacity for the star. Its capacity is easily exhausted by a sixteen candle-power incandescent light or even by a penny candle. But our capacity—our spiritual hunger—can anything less than God satisfy that?

Fish in Mammoth Cave are blind; they need no eyes, hence nature gives them

none. Nature is not blind. A hundred feet beneath the surface of a Missouri corn field they found, in digging for minerals, a fossil mastodon. The large bones were all intact. The skull was perfect. The eyeball sockets were there. The creature had eyes. We know that. We know it was no denizen of a subterranean cavern. It walked in the light and saw. We know, because of these evidences of its capacity to see.

Now look within the human heart. There is the world-wide, age-long, unappeased, insatiable, appealing quest for God,—"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." That is our spiritual eye. It signifies that there is Light, that this Light is for us; and "God is light."

This capacity may, indeed, be "extirpated by disuse." We may forfeit it. But that does not banish God from His universe. We cannot extinguish the sun by putting out our eyes! We may bandage our eyes, or blind them, but the day remains bright, and other eyes still see, and days return with rosy dawns and purple twilights, and stars still wheel their stately flight about the sun, and flowers still feel his warming beams even

beneath the snow, and grope their upward way.

Our religious nature is much like the life of a bulb beneath the sod. It is dark, but something great, something Infinite, draws us, and yielding, faith and hope and love expand till Time's white snows shall melt, and we look up into His face who hid Himself for long, yet called us through earth's cold and gloom to grow towards Him.

Are we growing Godward? Is our salvation nearer than when we first believed? Is our desire for God intenser than of old?

When Professor Starbuck wrote to several hundred people, asking them to tell him what led them to take the first step in their Christian lives, one young woman, keener in analyzing her own motives than many others, said, "I had a longing to get near to God." That is the essence of the religious impulse. The office of religion is to reveal to us the reality of the Undiscoverable. Jesus speaks: "No man hath seen the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him. No man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

What then is Jesus' mission in the world? And what is His ministry to us? First of all

to confirm our faith that God is. And He does confirm it. "Ye believe in God; believe also in Me." God is,—"If it were not so I would have told you." Which means, "Take my word for it—God is."

Without the help of Jesus Christ, it is increasingly difficult to believe in God; such is the modern view of the world. Mr. Edison has not found God in any retort or crucible! "The heavens have removed afar off and become astronomical." Without Jesus Christ we are "without God and without hope in the world." But with Him, ah, with Him, how easy it is! When we see Him, it is easy to believe. We believe, when we stand by Him as He prays, as He intercedes, as He suffers, as He submits, as He overcomes!

A friend of mine stood on a dock in New York as an Atlantic steamer came in from Southampton. At his side stood a youth who told him he was there to welcome his father who had been long absent. My friend did not know the father. At last as the steamer came nearer, he saw the youth's face light up with transfiguring joy. My friend did not see the father's face—would not have

recognized it if he had seen it—but he saw the light of that father's glory in the face of that father's son. Now let me read a text, and see if it may not come to you with fresh meaning. "God, who in the beginning caused the light to shine out of darkness, is shining in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." If we have not seen God, we have a Saviour,—and a kinsman—who has. And all the Old Testament looks forward, and all the New Testament looks backward, to Jesus Christ, and says, "Find God there!"

Our capacity for God proves God. So does our need of God. Our need! What words can speak our need? After they had banished God from France by statute, some one said amidst the blood and dust of the blackest day France ever saw, "If there is no God we must invent one, for we cannot get along without Him."

The sorrows of life demand a comforting God. The cares of life demand a compassionate God. The injustices of life demand a God who rules in equity. The "interrupted processes," the "withheld completions" of life demand a perfect God, a God who finishes

the circle where we mark a mere segment of it. The sins of the holiest demand a God who is a Saviour. Who among us has ever lived, since he left the fair fields of childhood, one whole white day?

But have we not literature and art and philanthropy? Oh, yes, but education never saved anybody. It only makes us more worth saving. Culture cannot cure moral cancer. Socialism cannot redeem society. What are we profited, if wealth be distributed, and we be left covetous and cruel? It required more than a moonlight sonata to raise Lazarus. How many public libraries would it take to cast out the unclean spirits from one Mary Magdalene, or how many art galleries to make a saint out of one John Bunyan, or one Jerry McAuley?

Earth's manifold voices cry aloud for God. By the life divine we seek, and the moral loss we fear; by the memories of our unclouded years and the hopes of all the ages yet to be: through life's short day and death's long night, our hearts and flesh cry out for the living God. And lo! our cry finds swift response in Him who shared our human life that we might share His life divine, and who

died our death that He might be the everlasting Way to God.

I think this morning of that old mediæval scholar whom Browning represents as saying —and what Johannes Agricola said, Jonathan Edwards said when he wrote, "I am resolved to make the salvation of my soul my chief business in life" —

> "There's heaven above, and night by night
> I look right through its starry roof,
> Nor suns nor moons, howe'er so bright,
> Avail to stop me. Splendour-proof,
> I keep the broods of stars aloof,
> For I intend to get to God!
> For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
> For in God's breast, my own abode,
> Those shoals of dazzling glory past,
> I lay my spirit down at last.
>
> "I lie where I have always lain,
> God smiles as He has always smiled,
> Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
> Ere stars were thunder-girt, or piled
> The heavens, God thought on me, His
> child!"

So said the prodigal: "I will arise and go to my father."

XV

The Power of Christ

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Cor. xii. 9.

ANY list of the great men of the first century of the Christian era which omits the name of the author of this text is very incomplete. Considered as to the power of his personality, the scope of his ambitions, the extent of his activities, the vitality of his influence while living and his influence since he died, no man,—no mere man—in that century, can compare with Paul. That diminutive, bald-headed, hook-nosed, near-sighted Jew—if tradition as to his personal appearance may be credited—did more to affect his age and all subsequent ages than any poet, philosopher, warrior or statesmen of his period.

We must not forget that two-thirds of our New Testament was written by this man. We read his words with greater care and diligence

than the words of any other author of that age excepting alone those of his Master, who, by the way, was not an author in the technical sense of the term. Jesus wrote nothing, so far as we know. He did write once, it is true, but with a frail reed He traced upon the sand letters the next rainfall or the footfall of the multitude speedily obliterated. But Paul wrote. He wrote much.

The writings of Paul are interesting, not alone for what they contain, but for what they do not contain. Great traveller as he was, there is almost nothing in his writings to give us any light on the social customs of the people among whom he dwelt. Child of Greek culture as he was, with a soul which must have been sensitive to beauty, we look in vain in his writings for any trace of description of scenes of natural beauty, or for any reference to the monuments of art which he must often have seen and admired. These omissions are very significant. They emphasize a fact to which his writings give much positive testimony, that he had but one consuming passion, and that was to convey neither sociological, nor geographical, nor economic, nor artistic information, but

to proclaim what he called the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Almost as remarkable is the meager information Paul gives us as to his own biography. There is very little in his writings of what Carlyle once called "the nasty nominative." We have indeed much information of value in the Acts of the Apostles concerning Paul's ministry. If Luke had not preserved this information for us, we were almost as much in the dark as to Paul's life as we are with reference to Shakespeare's personal history. There are two or three brief exceptions to the rule of reticence touching himself which Paul observed. One of these exceptions is in this chapter. He does allude to a personal experience. But he leaves us very much in doubt as to the real secret of that experience. Nobody knows what was the thorn in the flesh of which he tells us that he besought the Lord that it might depart from him. Whether it was his diminutive stature, or his defective vision, or an impediment in his speech, or dyspepsia, or rheumatism, or an ill-tempered wife, we cannot even guess. Each of these theories has had its particular champion. It is not important that we should

know. The essential fact is here,—he triumphed over it, whatever it was. He rose above it. If he did not ignore it, he used it as a stepping-stone to a higher self. (I hope it may not be understood that, if he was a married man, he used his wife as a stepping-stone.) Indeed, he did more than merely to use his infirmity. He gloried in it, gloried in it for a purpose, namely, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

It is of this power of Christ I speak. What is it? Of what was Paul thinking when he wrote these words? Does he touch here that eternally pressing problem in every reform, the problem of the moral dynamic? Does he touch the very heart and center and soul of Christian experience? I think he does.

Power is of three kinds, mechanical, chemical, and vital. Vital power is of three kinds, physical, that is to say, cellular, psychic and spiritual. The power of Christ is, evidently, vital and spiritual. The power which Jesus exercised during His ministry on earth was in part physical, and in part psychic. It was physical power He exerted when He calmed the sea and when He fed the multitude. It was psychic power He

manifested when He restored the demoniac to reason, and when He taught His disciples, weaning them from the traditionalism of their class and winning them to the large tolerance and catholicity of His views of the Kingdom of God. But there was another type of power He possessed for which there is no better name than soul power, spirit power. When He delivered Mary Magdalene from unclean spirits and redeemed her to penitence and virtue; when He reclaimed the coward and the egotist, Peter, and appointed him to leadership in the church, in which thenceforth he never defaulted, He exercised a kind of power for which neither physical nor mental science has any adequate term.

The miracle of Christianity is, that when Jesus disappeared from the sight of men, and when His physical and psychic powers ceased, His spiritual power, which hitherto had been local, began to be universal. It was expedient that He should go away in order that that power might be released and expanded. It started upon its world-wide and ago-long career on the Day of Pentecost. From that day until this there has never been

a time when the power of Christ has not rested upon large numbers of people of every tribe and nation, of every temperamental inclination, and of every circumstantial environment.

Scripture affirms, and Christian history testifies, that this spiritual power of Christ, which rests upon those of His people who care enough about it to claim it, manifests itself chiefly as follows:

First, in spiritual elevation. There are as many degrees of altitude in the spiritual world as there are in the physical. There are cave-dwellers, and nomads of the desert, and mountaineers. God has His mountaineers. They are His fighting men. They fight their battles at high altitudes, as under the very eye of God. They live on the heights. To a prophet of old the voice of God spoke saying, "Get thee up into a high mountain." Many of the most significant things in the life of Jesus occurred on mountains. He was tempted on a mountain, He began His public ministry on a mountain, He was transfigured on a mountain. On a skull-shaped mountain He paid "life's arrears of pain, darkness" and grief; from the slope

of a mountain He ascended in the attitude of blessing! Mountain gloom and mountain glory. Mountain trial and mountain triumph! But aside from these facts, Jesus' whole life was one of lofty aims and lofty efforts. Above the plane of animalism, and indeed above the plane of mere intellection, in the realm of truths which could never have been discovered by any amount of investigation or research; in the realm of forces that are not of the earth earthy, in communion with the Eternal, He spent His lonely, lovely years. Above the world of pleasure-seeking and money-getting; above the world of mere passive enjoyment; above the world of fame and social conquest, He lived serenely and by choice.

There is a term we sometimes use which best expresses this detachment, this isolation, this insulation from the atmosphere of the temporal, this elevation above the transient. We call it unworldliness. Singularly, unworldliness of the right sort does not disqualify one from citizenship in this world. The true citizen of the kingdom of God is the best citizen of earth,—the wisest, strongest, bravest and most useful. Some of the

sanest, shrewdest, and most practical characters the world has known have been men and women of most unworldly spirit. John Bright was such a man. Elizabeth Fry was such a woman. So was Josephine Lowell. Intensely interested in human conditions, and yet forever bearing about with them an atmosphere of detachment from the petty schemes of petty souls, they struck high notes. That is a pathetic confession in one of Oscar Wilde's poems in which he says:

> "Surely there was a time I might have struck
> one high clear note,
> To reach the ear of God."

The tragedy of life, the infinite tragedy of some lives, is that, conscious as they are of their capacity for moral elevation, they turn aside, prefer to live in the lowlands, and thus forfeit their soul's inheritance. This power of Christ is not inalienable. Once possessed, it does not secure its possessor against the possible loss of it. Ceaseless vigilance alone is guarantee of its permanence. "The perseverance of the saints consists of a series of continual rededications." The power of Christ rested on Paul apparently without a

break from the time of that vision at noonday on the Damascus road to the time when from the darkness of the Mamertine prison in Rome he wrote to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight."

Then, coincident with spiritual elevation and consequent to it, the power of Christ results in widened horizons. From high altitudes we see lands that are far off, lands of magnificent distances. All our talk about home mission fields and foreign mission fields is folly in view of the fact that from a little elevation racial and geographical distinctions disappear. Political lines separating one kingdom from another are invisible. If we could see the world as Christ saw it, as we believe He sees it now, who of us could tell what lands are "home" and what lands are "foreign" mission fields? This whole world was a foreign mission field to Him who came to seek and save the lost. And since He came to seek and save the lost, since these hills and valleys have been made sacred by the footfall of the Son of Man, all this world is His home mission field.

The difference between the great statesman and the little politician is largely a matter of

vision. The statesman sees; he "guideth his course by the stars." The politician thinks he sees. He hears the clamour of the impatient populace. The claims of the present and the local fill him with alarm. What has he to do with to-morrow? What does he care for unborn generations? Henry Clay, standing on the summit of a peak among the Alleghanies, heard the tread of coming multitudes who were to fill the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi. He who in 1674 gave it as his opinion that the really valuable land for purposes of settlement along the Atlantic Coast could not be wider than fifty or sixty miles, was blind and could not see afar off. Two men stand yonder at Ellis Island. One of them is filled with alarm because he sees a million people entering those open gates. He says, "They will crowd out our native population; they will overwhelm our American civilization." The other sees a little farther. He sees the children of those immigrants in the public school; he hears the little children of Polish Jews and Italian peasants singing "Land where my fathers died,"—and every one of them as proud of America as though his

father had died for the flag!—and he says, "With broad lands, and free presses, and free schools, and free churches, and a free spirit of democracy, these people shall not long remain aliens!"

Twenty years ago a man of large wealth and liberal impulses gave a liberal sum for the building of a church in a newly opened suburb of an American city. He was called foolish, and by some even his sanity was questioned. He did not live to see, but his critics have lived to see, the justification of that planting. That church is now the center of a great population, and it is a veritable power-house, from which emanate both light and heat and energy. The man I speak of was gifted with vision,—prevision.

That Roman Catholic missionary who was not permitted to enter China, and who paced the deck of his sailing vessel looking longingly towards the forbidden land, and crying, "Oh, rock, rock, when wilt thou open?" had his unfading vision. So had Robert Carey, the cobbler. So had Adoniram Judson, the apostle to Burma. And so have all that host of ten thousand men and women, the finest fruit of American college and uni-

versity life, who represent the Church of Christ in the Orient and on the Dark Continent. Blind are we who ask, "To what purpose is this waste?" They see. The power of Christ is resting on them and many a dim and dying eye has had glimpses which have been denied us, of the day when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

I recall the story of the little daughter of a medical missionary who was going out to establish a hospital on the sun-parched soil of India. The child saw such poverty, such destitution, such suffering, such squalor, such absence from human habitations of any sign of culture and comfort as she had never dreamed of, and said to her father, "It isn't nice here at all, is it, papa?" And he replied, "No, my dear, it isn't nice here, and that's the reason we have come." "Go tell American women," said a dying Hindoo widow, who had been lifted from her poor estate by the kind maternal arms of the church of God, "that we shall be their reward." The reward,—the end of the enterprise, the gathering in of all the nations, the moral conquest of the world by the ideas and

ideals of Christianity,—who can see this but those upon whom rests the power of Christ?

Furthermore, the physician's answer to his little girl reveals another respect in which the power of Christ, resting upon us, finds its expression. To read this text, read also, "The love of Christ constraineth us." The gifts of spiritual elevation and widened horizons were mere phantasms without the power imparted by the personal Spirit of a personal Lord. What was His power among men,—that power which drew to Him all good men and women, all who wanted to be good, and all little children? There is no other name for it than love. Love for our kindred is a very natural affection. He is most unnatural who will not do his utmost for his own. What name have we ugly enough to apply to one who does not protect and defend from wrong his own sister or his own daughter? Now look into the life of every man who devotes himself to the cure of social ills, look into the heart of every man who, though he may not be an active reformer, still strives to wear upon his breast the white flower of blameless living, and you will find that he has simply enlarged his con-

ception of duty in relation to those of his own family to the extent in which he has come to see the whole human family as one. He says, "I love my own, but who are my own? I am brother to all who need." That is exactly the lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus spoke it in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?"

A very remarkable story appeared in one of our American magazines a year or two ago. It was the story of the child of well-to-do parents who had been kidnapped, and who was lost forever to them. He was brought up among the very poor, and at a tender age was put into a factory where one day he met with an accident which cost him his life. But it so happened that the largest owner of that factory was that child's own father. When it was brought home to him that, in tolerating the unspeakable evil of child labour in his mill, he was condemning his own child to virtual slavery and to death, he saw more force in the plea for the abolition of child labour than he had ever seen before. Ah, yes, how we cherish our own! Well, the love of Christ is a power at once so extensive, so expansive, and so in-

tensive, that it leads those upon whom it rests to adopt humanity as their own. The closing chapter of a recent popular story gives us a glimpse of the outpouring of the poor and the lame and the halt and the blind at the funeral of a physician who was their much loved and much loving friend. A man of the world has come into this poor section of the city to attend the funeral. He says to somebody, "Who are these people? They act as though they were his father and mother and brothers and sisters." And the answer is, "They are."

I have said all there is time to say about the power of Christ which the apostle speaks of, for the sake of which he was glad to bear infirmities and even to suffer death. He found, and we shall find, that the power which rests upon us in life will not depart from us when life shall end. Indeed, to one who is in league with this power, life shall never end, for the power of Christ is eternal.

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